

FIVE CENTS

BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No. 48

A DASHING FIRE LADDIE

or The Heroism of Dick Macy



BY JOHN DE MORGAN

The fireman stood on the stone sill outside, and swung himself across, until his other foot rested upon the coping of the window, where stood Dick with his human burden, thus forming a straddling bridge.

BRAVE & BOLD

A Different Complete Story Every Week

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1903, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C. STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 48.

NEW YORK, November 21, 1903.

Price Five Cents.

A DASHING FIRE LADDIE;

OR,

The Heroism of Dick Macy.

By JOHN DE MORGAN.

CHAPTER I.

CHOOSING A PROFESSION.

"Sneer all you like, Tom, but I'd rather be a fireman than a soldier."

"Well, I wouldn't, Dick Macy. I am going to be a soldier. I shall go to West Point, and if you don't get killed in some fire, you will read of Gen. Levering, U. S. A."

The speakers were two boys in their last year at the well-known military academy at New Lenster.

Both boys were day scholars, for Dick's father was the highly esteemed rector of the Episcopal Church, within a quarter of a mile of the school, while Tom Levering was the son of a wealthy, retired manufacturer, who had built a palatial home in New Lenster.

The boys were companions—in fact, in school verbiage, chums—and both were ambitious.

The principal of the school had announced that two distinguished visitors were expected on the following day, and that most likely the students in the higher classes would be called on to tell in what direction their ambition would be directed when they left school.

It was this announcement which led to the conversation between the chums as they walked home.

The Rev. Dr. Macy had fully made up his mind that Dick

was to be a lawyer, his elder brother having decided for the church, and Dick showing no inclination in that direction.

Tom Levering's father thought the army would be the best career for Tom, and in that the son coincided with him. It was really remarkable that they should, seeing that father and son very seldom agreed on a subject.

"You stand very little chance of being a general, until you are gray-headed."

"What chance have you of being a chief?"

"A great deal better than you, for every town wants an experienced fireman, while generals live long and never get a chance of service."

Tom laughed at the idea of a general never seeing service, for in his heart that presented the greatest attraction for him. He wanted a lazy, respectable life, and he imagined he would meet with all he wanted in the army.

"Hello, where are you running to?"

"Jack Stead, what do you mean by the question?"

"Just what I said. I see you fellows walking as though Old Harry was after you, and I thought I would like to know the cause of the excitement."

"You were not at school to-day."

"That is the statement of a fact which demonstrates itself."

"Then you did not hear?"

"What?"

"Old Jonas says that to-morrow some great guns are to be at the school, and all the boys in the higher classes will be expected to make a speech."

"Well, you can do enough of that for all of us, Tom."

"That won't help matters. A bishop is to be there, and a general of the——"

"National Guard, or——" interrupted Jack.

"United States Army. And they are to ask us what we mean to be when we leave school."

"I shall be the same old chip, as you call me."

"That is not what they mean."

"What then?"

"What profession are we going to adopt?"

"I put it the other way about—what profession will adopt me. I have work enough without adopting anything or anbody."

Jack Stead had earned the sobriquet of the "Professor," because he always argued every point.

Macy explained the object of the expected visit, and Stead began to wish he could find an excuse for staying away.

"Dick, I wish you would help me in an algebraic problem."

"With pleasure, professor. What is it?"

Stead told him, and the good-natured boy asked his fellow-student to accompany him home.

Tom Levering left the couple at the crossroads, and they proceeded to the rectory.

The algebraic problem did not take Dick many minutes to propound, and then the boys discussed other things.

"I do not know what I shall be after I graduate," said Stead. "I must earn my living at once, and it is difficult to choose."

"I know it is, Jack; but whatever you choose will be the right thing."

"Thank you, Dick, for the confidence you have in me. I hope I shall deserve it always."

"Of course you will."

"What is it, boys? Are you discussing the latest ball game?" asked Mr. Macy, who had entered the room unnoticed by the boys.

"No, sir."

"No, father; we were talking about our future."

"Very important thing to think of. My boy will shine as a lawyer, of course, while you, Stead, will be equally brilliant as a doctor."

"I am afraid not, Dr. Macy; it takes too long to gain a footing, and father has spent too much on my education."

"Well, well; time will prove all things."

For a few minutes after his father left the room, Dick was silent. He was thinking how grieved his father would be if he rejected the law and became a fireman.

"What is the matter, Dick?"

"Got the blues."

"So soon?"

"The *pater* wants me to be a lawyer, and I shall break his heart if I set my mind against it. What shall I do?"

"Do the right thing, Dick. Please your father if you can, and trust that all will come right."

The next day the boys at the military academy put on their dress uniform, and waited anxiously for the visitors.

There was an exhibition of military drill, some difficult maneuvers and a march past the visitors and guests prior to the indoor exercises.

Gen. Goston looked proudly at the young cadets, and mentally wished every boy was as well drilled, and that we had a conscription in the States and a large army, for his whole heart was in military work.

Outside the army, society was of little account.

Bishop Norris enjoyed the parade and drill, but expressed himself as anxious for the mental treat he had been led to believe he would have.

In the exhibition hall the boys were all gathered at the close of the drill.

They looked well in their uniforms, and there was something almost fascinating as the young officers saw to each boy being in his seat.

The clanking of the swords sounded more military than scholastic.

After an address by the bishop, and a few words from Gen. Goston, the senior class was invited to express the preferences of the members as regarded their future career.

Each boy was to give reasons for his choice, and argue logically in favor of the position he assumed.

One spoke strongly in favor of the pursuit of medicine, and pointed out the good a doctor could do among the people.

Several got confused when trying to give reasons for their choice, and Harry Kingston, after stammering along for some time, provoked a hearty laugh by summing up his reasons in the very logical one: "I am going to be a civil engineer because I want to."

Tom Levering decided in favor of military life, and warmed the general's heart by his eloquent peroration on military heroism.

Then, amid breathless excitement, the rector's son arose and stood a few moments silent.

"I would rather be a fireman hero," he commenced, "than a military hero. The one wins his reward in saving lives, the other gains renown by destroying lives, and I think it nobler to save than destroy."

Not another word could he utter.

He had not intended speaking as he had done.

When he arose, it was with the full intention of deciding in favor of a legal career, but his tongue uttered the thoughts of his mind, and his will was powerless to prevent.

He hung his head as he walked back to his seat. He had made a mistake. It seemed to him that he had insulted one of the guests. The thought was terrible.

How could he make atonement?

While he was wondering over his *faux pas*, his father stepped down from the platform and walked toward him.

"Dick, you did nobly!" The rector placed his hand on his son's shoulder. "It is nobler to save than to destroy. I am proud of you."

A gleam of gladness lighted up the boy's face as he heard the words spoken by his father, but in his heart he knew how hard it had been for the rector to speak as he had done.

"Father, I shall be a lawyer, as you wish."

But the rector had returned to the platform, and did not notice the words.

CHAPTER II.

FIRE AT THE SCHOOL.

For several days the strange speech delivered by Dick Macy was the subject of discussion among the younger members of the fashionable society of New Lenster.

The girls, almost without exception, took Dick's part, but the boys were ashamed that the rector's son should have such low ideas.

There was no paid fire department in the town, the fire companies being voluntary, and most of the young men belonged to one or other of the companies.

The membership was sufficient to exempt from service on juries, and that was a *desideratum*, and then the young men liked to wear the badges and look important.

Yet some of these young aristocrats were among the loudest in their denunciation of Dick.

It was just the thing to be a volunteer fireman; but a paid officer! That was a different thing altogether.

Among the elder members of society, Dick's speech was praised as a piece of philosophic eloquence, not to be taken as personal in its application, but only as a statement of a general principle.

As Dick said no more about it, the idea gained ground that he had seized upon the idea for oratorical reasons only.

For some weeks no alarm of fire was sounded in New Lenster, and the firemen enjoyed the social intercourse of their companies just as if the engine house had been a social club.

Dick Macy continued his studies at the military academy, and made great progress.

One afternoon the elder boys were in the laboratory, experimenting in chemistry.

Long-continued immunity from accident had made the boys careless, and on this occasion a large quantity of alcohol and other inflammable liquids had been left uncovered.

Tom Levering was experimenting with hydrogen gas, and his retort exploded.

Every one rushed from the room, fearing that the worst had not happened.

In that they were right, though had they possessed more calmness and presence of mind, a calamity might have been averted.

The bursting of the retort had caused a spirit lamp to be thrown down, and the fiery spirits run along the floor until they reached a large bottle of alcohol, which was uncorked.

Even then there would have been no danger had not one of the boys, in his haste in running from the laboratory, thrown down a sponge saturated with gasoline which he had been using to cleanse some apparatus.

The blazing alcohol from the lamp reached the sponge, and a fierce flame shot up, encircling the neck of the bottle of spirits in its fiery embrace.

As the heat became greater, the spirits began to evaporate, and caught fire.

In a few minutes the whole laboratory was in a blaze.

This room was in the basement, and unless the fire could be checked the whole building might be burned down.

Dick had not been in the laboratory that afternoon, and he was surprised to see the boys scamper up the steps and run into the yard as though some evil genii had been evoked by their magic experiments.

"What is it, Tom?" he shouted.

Tom did not answer, but kept on running.

"If Tom runs like that when he is a soldier, he will always lead a retreat," said Dick to Jack Stead, who was with him.

"Look, Dick, the school is on fire!"

A big belching of smoke from the laboratory window had been seen by Jack.

Dick ran toward the house and unfastened the hose which hung on the wall near a hydrant.

To screw on the connection was but the work of a moment.

"Give the alarm, Jack; I will attend to the hose."

He drew the hose to the laboratory window, and then ran back to turn on the water.

A strong stream of water began to pass through the nozzle, and Dick directed it, through the window.

The water drowned the flame for a moment, but a burst of smoke came through the window so suddenly that Dick fell backward, the hose-nozzle turning over his shoulder, and the water, striking the principal full in the face, knocked him over like a tenpin.

Dick was up in a moment, and again had the hose under control.

The fire had found a weak place in the ceiling of the laboratory, and a tiny flame was seen rising through the floor of the room above.

It is astonishing how rapidly fire will spread.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed before the entire room above seemed to be full of smoke.

"Save that room, Dick!" shouted the principal, Dr. Jonas

Macy directed the hose through the window, but it did not seem to reach the flame.

He climbed up on the window sill and sent a steady stream of water through the window.

That did not satisfy him.

Dragging the hose after him, he jumped into the room, holding the nozzle close to his face, so that the water would clear a little space in the air, which should be free from smoke.

He had heard that it was the best policy to fight fire from the

inside, and he tried to reach the other side of the room, so that he might drive the fire outward, and thus save the building.

No one had thought of giving an alarm until Dr. Jonas, in looking through the window, was nearly suffocated by smoke.

As he fell back, he ejaculated:

"Fire! Fire! Send for the engine!"

The boys who were primarily responsible for the disaster had come back, and watched the unaided efforts of Macy with interest.

But no sooner did they hear the doctor say "Send for the engine!" than they almost fell over each other to reach the bell which hung over the main gate, and which was never rung except in case of fire or other great danger.

Tom Levering was climbing up the short ladder to reach the bellrope, when Bob Carlton stumbled against it, and both ladder and boy fell to the ground.

The ladder was quickly raised, and Carlton won the distinction of ringing the great bell.

A few minutes later, the wild, weird whistle was heard, and all knew that the fire laddies would leave their work and hurry to the engine houses, and from thence to the scene of the fire.

While they were doing this, Dick had thrown himself on his face and crawled along on the floor, getting the hose in such a position that he was able to direct the water right on the flames.

A few minutes, and the noise of the clattering horses could be heard, and the Excelsior Hook and Ladder Company was the first on the field.

The hose company was only a few minutes later, and Chief Dempsey, who rode up in a buggy, was on the ground before the companies were ready for work.

"I do not think you are needed," Dr. Jonas told the chief.

"Put it out, eh?"

"Richard Macy did."

Dick emerged from the building at that moment.

His own mother would have failed to recognize him. He was black with smoke, and his clothes were torn and dirty.

"My dear Richard, how can I ever repay you? You have saved the academy. I owe you everything I possess."

It was not often that Jonas was so impulsive and effusive, but the old man did really owe Dick a debt of gratitude, for he owned the building, and had failed to renew the insurance.

"I think, doctor, that I shall have to levy on you for some new clothes."

"I should think so. Tell your good *pater* to have some made at once, and send in the bill to me."

Dick was a hero. Even Tom Levering said so.

And when Dick was on his way home, all dirty and begrimed as he was, a lady met him, and in the impulsiveness of the moment, threw her arms around him and kissed his smoke-colored cheek.

There was great danger that Dick would be spoiled by the lionizing of the next few weeks.

He bore his honors nobly, and neither the rough manners of some of the volunteer firemen nor the petting of the society

ladies changed him one bit, save to make him feel more than ever that it was a noble thing to be engaged in life-saving.

It was soon after this that Dr. Macy gave in to Dick's strong wishes, and decided to give him a chance to become a real fireman.

"You see, Dick," he said, "the fire department only wants capable men. So a school is opened at stated times. The young men who want to be firemen have to attend every day from nine until four o'clock. They learn climbing, scaling walls, and, in fact, everything in connection with a fireman's duty that can be imparted. Then each night they have to report at some engine house or truck house and spend the night there, going out to any fires there may be, and at the end of a month the students are either passed or rejected."

"It must be very interesting, sir."

"If you would like to take a course, you can do so; of course, you are not bound to be a fireman, even if you pass."

"I should like it, father; but I am content to be a lawyer."

"I fancy that is what you will be, for the month may tire you of your present whim."

"It is no whim, sir."

"No, I do not think it is with you; but if you like to enter, you can."

"Thank you, father."

Dick was jubilant. It had been his great ambition to join such a school, and now his father had given permission.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRAINING SCHOOL.

"Your name?"

"Richard Macy."

"It is your desire to become an active member of the fire department of this city?"

"It is."

"You know that you will have to be as obedient as a soldier, to give up all thoughts of comfort, to have no life outside the fire department?"

"I understand that a fireman must devote all his energies to his work."

"It is a hard life. You will, if accepted, have to obey orders, even if you know those orders mean death. You will have to trust to yourself at times, and all blame will rest on you if you make a mistake."

"I understand."

"And still you, a clergyman's son, wish to be a fireman?"

"Yes."

"All right. Sign your name here."

Dick signed his name, and was then passed on to the examining officer of the department.

Dick entered before the days of civil service examinations, but each applicant was expected to pass an examination in various branches of knowledge, whereas, for all practical purposes in the department it was not necessary to know the number of planets,

their distances from the earth, the action of the moon on the tides, and other things asked Dick Macy.

But wise men thought otherwise, and Dick sat down to his desk to write out the answers to these and a hundred other questions.

It was easy for him to do so, for he had been a diligent student.

He learned later that all were not expected to pass this examination, only those whose social position might make them available for a higher position than that of an ordinary fireman.

When his papers were examined and declared correct, he was taken into the gymnasium.

This was a lofty building, fitted up with every appliance used in the department.

After a few preliminary remarks from the director, each of the novitiates were ordered to mount a ladder and stand on a beam which crossed the room about six feet from the ceiling.

Dick was the third, and easily reached the beam.

When all had ascended, the ladder was taken away, and the novitiates were left standing on the beam.

Although none had been nervous before, each felt a little squeamish when deprived of the means of descending.

"Don't get nervous!" shouted the instructor. "Join hands!"

It was quite a task to raise a hand steadily to grasp that of the next novice, but it was done, and the ladder was again placed against the beam, and the young men descended in turn.

Then came the throwing of a rope over the beam, and securing it.

Exercises with scaling ladders finished the first morning's instruction.

The whole proceedings differed but little from those Dick had been accustomed to in the gymnasium of the New Lenster Military Academy.

After an hour's rest for dinner, the instruction recommenced.

It is not our purpose to enter into details of the work given in the training school, though we found it highly interesting when we were permitted to watch the young firemen at work.

The duties of the school ended at four o'clock, and each novice, after the first week, was given a card on which was the number of the engine house or truck house to which he must report at six that evening for a night's work.

Dick was sent to a good station, and found the officer in charge an exceedingly nice man.

Upstairs the large room looked like the ward of some hospital.

A number of clean, white-covered beds were ranged along the side, and by each bed stood a pair of boots.

Dick was shown the advantage of these boots. Trousers were attached to them, so that, when roused in the night by the alarm of fire, the fireman jumped out of bed, put on his long boots, and pulled up the trousers, dressing in a few seconds.

With his trousers just pulled up, he has to reach the brass pole, which provides a quicker means of descent than the stairs.

"Macy, when the alarm is given, you must do your best to be

with us. If you cannot do it first time, you may succeed the second."

"But if I am asleep—will any one wake me?"

There was a laugh, as well there might be, for a fireman has to sleep like a dog—with one eye and one ear open. In fact, as a fireman told the writer, he was often on his engine and rattling along the street before he was actually awake.

Dick had been in bed an hour, when he heard the bell ring, and saw every bed vacated, the men pulling on their clothes and sliding down the pole quicker than could be timed.

Macy was just at the bottom of the pole when the others were reascending.

"False alarm?" asked Dick.

"No; only it was not for our station."

"Why waken us, then?"

"My dear fellow, you will be awakened for every fire, even if it is five miles away and you are not wanted."

Up to bed again, but only for a minute, for scarcely had they laid down when the bell rang again, and the clatter of the horses could be heard taking their places under the harness.

The ringing of the bell releases the chain which keeps the horses in their stalls, and the moment the chain falls the horses move to their places under the hanging harness, just as quickly as the men.

The men were in their places, the drivers on their seats, by the time the bell stopped ringing.

Again they were not wanted.

The bell had rung a signal for another district.

The officer explained to Dick how he would know.

"Just now the bell rang one, then a pause; five, then a pause, and finally three; that meant a fire in the neighborhood of Division and Ludlow Streets. Had it been our station, it would have been some number in three hundred, as three—eight—seven, for example."

For the third time the men went to bed, and slept the remainder of the night without being aroused by the alarm.

At nine o'clock, Dick had to be at the school again, where he was taught the use of scaling ladders.

The exercises were dangerous, but no one was hurt seriously, though some were badly bruised.

Often visitors attended to watch the training, and ladies, especially, wanted all the most hazardous exercises gone through for their benefit.

Dick was a favorite with the visitors, and was ever ready to show all he could do; but some of the novices were bashful, and even irritable, while being watched.

"Macy and Edwards, will you show these ladies how you would rescue any one from the sixth story by means of the scaling ladders?"

The ladies had brought a letter from a prominent politician to the instructor, and he naturally wanted to please them.

At one side of the gymnasium there was a miniature house, or, to be more correct, an elevation of one side of a house. It was

divided into three stories, the windows being of the ordinary size, and the distance between each about half the usual number of feet.

Short scaling ladders were used, so that the proportions would be the same as in an ordinary house and with the long ladders.

These scaling ladders were made of one long pole, through which, at equal distances, ran the rungs. At one end of the ladder were projecting hooks, so made that they could be thrown over a window sill, and so secure themselves.

Macy took one of the ladders and raised it above his head until the hook was level with the window sill. Then he swayed it for a moment, bringing it to an anchorage in the window.

"All right, Edwards!" cried Macy, as he ran up the ladder and stood on the sill.

Edwards followed him, until the sill was reached. Around his waist was a belt with a loop or handle on one side. Macy caught this handle and braced himself by the window-jamb.

Edwards drew up the ladder and raised it to the next window, going up as soon as it was secure. He then took his place in the window, and held Macy until he had raised the ladder to the top story.

"There, madam, that is the way we could reach the highest building in our city."

"It seems safe enough, and I hope if ever I am in a building on fire, these brave men will be there to rescue me."

When Macy and Edwards descended, they were warmly congratulated by the visitors, one lady taking such a fancy to Dick that she asked him his name, and when he told her, she asked him if he was related to the Rev. Dr. Macy, who was a friend of her father.

She was delighted when he told her of his relationship, and begged him to visit at her house whenever he had a spare hour.

Dick was very proficient, for his heart was in the work; no exercise seemed too hard, no exertion too great for him.

It was no wonder that he was a favorite with all, or nearly all, with whom he came in contact.

Among the probationers, or novices, there was one who was envious and jealous.

Mathew Guerdon was certain it was owing to Dick's superior social standing that he was a favorite. Mat was a snarler. He hated successful people. Nothing was too bad to say against any one who became known to fame. He was not bad-hearted, but suffered from the strange disease of discontent.

We have all met with sufferers from this complaint. Its victims are never satisfied. If they are in good health, they feel slighted because every one takes it for granted and never asks how they are. If they are sick, they tell you they hate people bothering them with their inquiries and suggested remedies. If they are rich, things go wrong, and if they are poor, then the rich are everything that is bad.

Mathew Guerdon was one of these sufferers. He was always finding something that was wrong. For two weeks he had concentrated all his dislike on Dick.

"If ever that fellow Guerdon can do you an injury, he will do it," said Edwards to Macy one afternoon.

"Oh, I don't think so. He barks, but he would not bite."

"Do not be too sure. Be on the watch all the time, and if he only barks, you will not be hurt, and if he wants to bite, you will be ready."

Dick only laughed at the advice, but later, when he reflected on all the strange things Guerdon had said, he did feel a little shaky about him. And he felt still more so when twice he was assigned to the same engine house with him.

The first time nothing happened of any consequence, but the second occasion was one long to be remembered by Dick Macy.

CHAPTER IV.

HANGING IN MIDAIR.

It was three o'clock in the morning when the alarm was sounded, and every man in Engine House No. 5 was roused from his slumber and hurried away to a fire.

From the time the first alarm was given to the moment the engine was out in the street was less than half a minute.

It may seem incredible, but it is an absolute fact that in some cases men have been in bed asleep, and eighteen seconds later they have been on their way to the fire, their horses harnessed, the steam up and every man in his place on the engine or in the hose wagon.

It was Dick's first experience of such excitement.

He was drawn up on the engine, and while the horses were in motion he was strapped to the seat.

What a wild drive that was!

The big bell clanged! The horses' feet clattered over the granite blocks of the city pavement. The sparks flew out of the engine stack.

On past every obstacle they tore, the horses entering into the spirit of the excitement and feeling how much depended on them.

"It's the Belvidere!" ejaculated the driver, but Dick could not make any response, for his breath was all gone.

The Belvidere, the largest and most influential hotel in the city, on fire! That was exciting enough, for there must be a hundred guests within its walls, not reckoning the family of the proprietor and all the help.

Standing at the corner of a street, its commanding presence made it a conspicuous object in the city.

It stood two miles away from Engine House No. 5, and so the chief must have feared the fire would be difficult to get under control, or he would not have sent for engines so far away.

When No. 5 got there, the fire had gained terrible headway.

Several engines were there, but the force of water was not strong enough to get the fire under control.

"Five, get out your Siamese connection and join with Seven!"

"Yes, sir."

Dick had opened the tool box at the side of the hose wagon and taken out the connection named after the celebrated Siamese twins.

It was made in the form of the letter "Y," each branch of the upper part of the letter being attached to an engine, the stem being connected with the hose. By this means two engines were pumping into the one hose.

Guerdon helped Dick fix it, and the engineers put on a full force of steam, but the force of water was even less than with the single hose.

"Who fixed that connection?" asked the chief.

"Ten extra," answered Guerdon.

The men are known by numbers, and the probationers by numbers with the word extra attached. Macy was "Ten extra," while Guerdon was "Nine extra."

"Curse your fooling!" exclaimed the chief, as he looked at the connection.

It was turned upside down, and so the automatic valves were open all the time, with the effect of causing the water to run into the coupler from one hose and back into the other. When the Siamese connection was turned over, the water at once came through with such force as to almost knock down the two men who held the nozzle.

The fire had broken out so rapidly that it seemed impossible to save the building.

"Are all the people out?" asked the chief.

"No; there must be twenty, at least, on the upper floors."

A number of men were detailed to save the persons imprisoned by the flames.

It was impossible to ascend the marble stairs, for the fire eddied up the stair shaft with fearful power, and the marble was red-hot.

"Nine and Ten extras, take the battering-ram into the third floor of the next house and break a hole through!"

Dick and Guerdon got out the heavy brass ram and carried it up the stair of the next house.

Catching hold of the handles on either side of the ram, they swung it to and fro until a crash told of its destructive work.

A hole was soon made, and the hose passed through.

A stream of water hissed and sputtered as it fell on the hot floors, and the room was soon filled with steam.

"Save me! oh, save me!"

"That was a woman's cry," said Dick.

"Sounded like it. Where can she be?"

"I do not know; but I am going to find out."

Without waiting for instructions or permission, Dick started up the stairs, until he reached the scuttle in the roof.

Opening it, he climbed out on the roof, and looked at the windows of the hotel, which rose several stories higher.

Three stories above, he saw a girl's face at the window.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

"Yes—and, oh! I shall be burned to death! It is horrible!"

"Can you not descend the stairs?"

"No; the stairs have fallen, and the fire is reaching this floor."

"Stay just where you are. If you can wrap a blanket around your face, do so. I will save you."

Dick climbed back through the roof into the house, and ran down the stairs.

He wanted a scaling ladder, but they were all being used.

Getting the rope ladder from his truck, he again ascended the stairs, and called on Guerdon to follow and help to rescue the girl.

Guerdon grumbled considerably at the apparent command given by Dick, and he mumbled:

"Why could he not have asked me nicely, instead of ordering me?"

But he followed Dick to the roof.

A rope ladder is all very well for a descent, but it is difficult to adjust one to a window by throwing.

Several times he tried to get it into the first window, but failed.

"I will get a scaling ladder," shouted Mat.

"Do so, if you can—only hurry."

Dick managed to reach the first window above the roof, and then he tried to rise to the next story inside the burning hotel.

The walls and floors were too hot, while the smoke was suffocating, so he crawled through the window and stood on the sill, waiting for Mat. He waited a long time, but Mat did not come, so again the rope ladder was used.

Try all he could, he was not able to get the hooks secured on the next window sill.

"Are you there?" he called out.

"Yes."

"Tear up a sheet, if you can, and tie the pieces together."

The girl had thought of that before, and had the sheet already torn.

"What shall I do with it?"

"Can you tie one end to the bedstead?"

"I will try."

In a few minutes the girl called out that she had done what Dick had requested.

"Now lower the sheet out of the window."

It would not reach by two feet of Dick's uplifted hands.

There was no time to be lost.

He stood on the sill, and looking up to gauge the distance, sprang up and caught the sheet.

Fortunately, the girl knew how to tie a knot, for had she not, he would have fallen to the ground and been killed.

He had secured the rope ladder to his waist, and as he climbed up the sheet he drew the ladder up with him.

"Can I not come down to the next window?" asked the girl.

"I am not a bit afraid."

"Do you think you could?"

"Yes, if you will steady the rope," was her reply.

"I am ready; keep the rope securely in your hands while you slide down. I will catch you."

The girl, as brave as any man could be, swung herself out of the window and began her descent to the next story below.

Dick caught her and pulled her into the room.

He saw that she was about his own age, and a fine, handsome girl, though he had but little time to look at her.

"We can get to the next floor by the rope ladder."

"What you say I will do," said the girl, bravely.

After one or two narrow escapes, they reached the roof of the house from which Dick had attempted the rescue.

"Stand there until I open the scuttle."

Dick tried his best to open the scuttle, but all his efforts were in vain.

Guerdon, when he had gone for the scaling ladder, had, either by accident or design, closed the scuttle, which fastened with a spring on the inside.

They could not be seen from the street below, and Dick's heart failed when he saw the peril in which he was placed.

He crawled down the roof until he reached the gutter.

Then he looked down on the scene below.

"Help!" he cried, but no one heard him.

"Can you stay there for five minutes?" he asked the girl.

"I'll try."

She was losing her courage. And no wonder, for she stood on a little ledge only twelve inches wide.

Above her was the roof ridge; below her the street, with its busy scenes.

The slightest movement, and she might be thrown into the street and be killed.

Once she thought if she could climb to the ridge of the roof she would be safer, but she had confidence in Dick, and he said to stay where she was.

Dick crawled along the gutter until he reached the corner, down which an iron leader pipe was fixed.

If he could get down one story by means of the leader, he could manage to crawl to a fire escape which led from the windows of the lower story.

"Stand still, and do not be afraid; I will save you!" he called to the girl, as he lowered himself over the edge of the gutter and hung with his hands, forty feet from the ground.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE-SAVING.

"Oh!"

The exclamation came from scores of throats as the people saw Dick Macy hanging in such a perilous position. The boy heard the cry, and knew that his danger was known. It gave him courage. He held on for a time to gain breath, and also to steady his nerves.

Although a daring climber, he knew that to descend a dozen feet down a leader pipe was a task from which most would shrink.

"Hold on! We will run a ladder up presently!"

"There isn't a ladder to spare. We dare not take one from the hotel," said Battalion Chief Nelson.

Dick heard the speech, and knew that the chief was right. To save him might place a dozen brave men in deadly peril.

"Never mind me. I can get down!"

He reached out with one hand and caught the pipe. Alas! it was rotten, and crumbled in his touch.

"God of Heaven! save me!" he cried, in the anguish of his heart.

Cautiously, he looked over the wall, and saw that if he could manage to pass along the gutter hand over hand for a few feet he could reach a dormer window, through which he could enter the house.

The weight of his body was greater than he had ever imagined, and of course seemed to get heavier every moment. To hang from a trapeze in a gymnasium for a few seconds is trying enough on the muscles of the arms, but to have to bear one's whole weight forty feet above the ground, with no firmer grip than resting the finger tips on a tin gutter, was another thing altogether.

Every time he moved his hand, he felt that he would be obliged to leave loose and fall to the street below.

It was slow work, but at last he felt the frame of the window.

To smash the glass was easy, and he pushed his arm through the window, thus getting a firmer grip.

After a pause to gain new strength, he pulled himself up to the roof and crawled into the room. He fell like a log on the floor. His physical energies were exhausted, but he had work to do.

Drawing himself up, he crawled to the door, and found it locked.

How he threw his whole weight against the panels of that door! He wished they would not make the doors so strong. Again and again he pushed with his shoulders, then kicked the lower panels, but made no impression. Once more he tried, this time on the frame itself, near the lock. He felt it give, and that renewed his strength. There is nothing so stimulating as success, or promise of success.

Stepping back a few inches, he braced himself for another attempt.

His strength was greater than he bargained for. The door flew open, and he fell forward on his face with such force that it seemed to shake the house.

It was a good minute before he felt able to endure further exertion, but he never lost remembrance of the brave girl who was waiting on that narrow ledge, trusting to him.

He reached the scuttle, and opened the door. The breath of fresh air was revivifying.

He was mystified. He had gone through the next house. That accounted for the fact that he had not seen the dormer window when he stood on the roof by the side of the girl he had rescued from the hotel.

He crawled along the roof until he was again face to face with the girl, who was fast losing consciousness.

"Be brave and trust in me, will you not?"

"I do trust you. Oh, save me!"

"Yes, but the attempt is one of great danger to us both. You must be courageous."

"If we fall, we will die together."

"Yes, but I have no wish to die. Come along; do just as you see me doing. I will not let you fall if I can help it; and if you fall, I shall go with you."

The house was reached, and Dick had the satisfaction of leading the rescued girl down the stairs and into the street.

What cheering there was when he was recognized!

"He is a great hero," said an old gentleman, whose white hair and beard gave him a patriarchal appearance.

Dick did not wait for congratulations. He was No. 10, extra, and was awaiting orders. It is not often that a man gets a chance to distinguish himself above his fellows at his first great fire, but Dick had that proud privilege.

All night and most of the next day the men fought the fire, without cessation or thought of rest. It was a breaking in for the clergyman's son, and he knew what such a life meant, for every day he was liable to be called out for such duty.

For one week after the great fire at the Belvidere, Dick had a holiday. He was exempted from attendance at the school, and also from night duty at the engine houses.

His name had been in the papers, and his fame had become so great that actors mentioned him in gags at the theatres, clergymen referred to him from the pulpits, and the newspapers printed what purported to be his portrait. Not that the portraits were anything like him, for no two were alike, but the intention was to honor him.

All sorts of stories were told about him. One report represented him as a millionaire's son, another that he was the son of a bishop, while a third insisted that he was a foreign duke who wanted to see life as it really was in his young days.

One morning he received a dainty little note, inviting him to call at the Hotel Bismarck, and receive the thanks of a lady whose life he had saved at the Belvidere fire.

He replied that if he had saved a life, he was pleased, but that he desired no thanks, as he had only done his duty.

But when he received another letter from the lady, asking him to accept an invitation to five o'clock tea, and assuring him that only her mother and herself would be there, he consented, and made his way to the fashionable hotel.

He was warmly welcomed by a lady, who thanked him for his work at the fire.

"My daughter cannot think of anything else," said Mrs. Albrecht. "It was so fortunate that you saw her, for she had been forgotten."

The door opened, and Alice Albrecht entered. She had purposely allowed her mother to receive the young fire laddie.

She presented her hand to Dick, and cordially thanked him.

He remembered her at once, and knew that she had been in a most perilous position. He was glad that she was about his own age, for he became more at ease with her.

Alice laughed as she told him that the five o'clock tea was a

mere pretense, for her mother intended keeping him for dinner, and, if he had no other engagement, for the evening.

Dick had no valid excuse for leaving, so he accepted the invitation, and was not at all sorry he had met such charming people.

"Father is in Germany," Alice told him, "and mamma is so sure that he will want to know you that she insisted on my writing to you at once—and I wanted to do it sooner," she added, with pretty *naïveté*.

"Are you really a duke in disguise?" Alice asked.

"No; I am proud to be an American, for I think an American citizen is a greater distinction than any title of aristocracy."

No sooner had he uttered this patriotic sentiment than he thought he had made a mistake.

"Excuse me; perhaps I was too warm in my pride of American citizenship?"

"No, indeed; but why did you imagine so?"

"You are—German?"

"Only by descent. Papa was born in Germany; but he came here when he was a boy, and has lived here ever since; so, you see, I am also an American, and mamma is very American, are you not?"

"Yes, my dear; and I agree with Mr. Macy that there is no grander title than that of American citizen."

The conversation did not lag after that. Dick felt as much at home as though he had known the Albrechts all his life.

Alice did not like to refer to the Belvidere fire, though she told him how her mother was led out of the burning building, and had been led to believe that her daughter had left earlier.

"Oh, Mr. Macy, if my daughter had been killed, I should have prayed Heaven to die also! You saved me my darling, and there is nothing that I could do for you which would be too much."

"Was he not brave, mamma?"

"Brave? Yes; a fireman is the truest hero. He devotes all his life to saving the lives and property of others. If I were a king, I would bestow the greatest honors on a fire hero, and the best monuments should be erected to those who distinguished themselves in fighting the fire demon."

"Then you do not think a man loses social standing by being a fireman?"

"Not in my estimation; nor, I am sure, in the estimation of any right-thinking person."

"I am so pleased to hear you say that! for my father was afraid I should be ostracized."

"May I speak as plainly as your mother would?"

"I should wish nothing better."

"Then let me say that, unfortunately, in this country of ours there has grown up a feeling among a few that work of all kinds is very degrading; that a man who works at a manual trade is so much lower in the social scale than a man who is a lawyer or a doctor; whereas, I think that all labor is honorable, and I am sure I would rather call a good mechanic friend than a bad lawyer."

"Well done, mamma. If we ever get the right to vote, I shall work to send you to Congress. Do you not think she would make an excellent member?"

"A great deal better than most of those there at the present time," answered Dick, most gallantly, though with real fervor.

Mrs. Albrecht did not indorse the New Woman movement, and she treated the reference to it as a joke.

"A person need not be in Congress to make an impression on society, and I am not sure that influence is not lost when a man enters the halls of legislation. I deplore the tendency of the times in lauding foreign titles, and thinking foreign manners and customs so much better than ours simply because they are foreign. So you see, Mr. Macy, I am as American as you are."

As Dick walked to his boarding house that night he rejoiced in his good fortune.

The Albrechts were worth knowing. Not only did Mrs. Albrecht have the courage to give utterance to true Americanism, but she occupied such a position in the society of cultured Boston, where she resided, that her words had weight.

Her husband was wealthy, and was just as patriotic as his wife, while Alice, their only child, was as good a specimen of true maidenly worth as could be found anywhere.

Dick Macy was impressionable.

He was none the worse, but all the better for that.

He went home and to bed, his mind full of thoughts of Alice and her mother, though it must be confessed that the younger lady occupied the largest place in his thoughts.

He fell asleep, and dreamed. His dreams were pleasant at first, because they were about Alice, but the pleasure passed, and a great horror filled his mind as his dreams pictured Alice a victim of the fire fiend.

He thought he saw a monster sitting on a throne, and waving a scepter over the city. Wherever his scepter indicated, a fire burst out. At every new column of flame which ascended into the clouds, he laughed with demoniac glee and chanted a refrain which told of the horrors of his work.

Dick felt a cold perspiration bathing his body, but he could not rise. He knew that he was the victim of a nightmare, but his will was powerless to break the chains of the demon which possessed his mind.

The fire fiend gloated over victims innumerable, and as Dick saw, in his dream, young girls brought out of burning houses dead, and old men and women in all sorts of horrible contortions, through the work of the fire fiend, he cried, aloud:

"I defy thee, fire demon! I will be thy Nemesis! I will fight thee in every way, and will curb thy power!"

This outburst broke the bonds of nightmare, and he awoke. His body was wet with perspiration, and he knew that he had suffered greatly in his sleep.

In his mind there were two visions, or pictures of the night, indelibly fixed. He saw the fire fiend just as though it was a living person, with unlimited powers for evil. And when he de-

fied the fiend, he saw the sweet smile of Alice Albrecht encouraging him in his resolve.

As the day passed, the dream became fainter, but those two pictures remained vividly impressed on his mind.

CHAPTER VI.

MANEUVERS.

When Dick reported at the fire school, he had to undergo a rigid catechetical examination as to his reasons for absenting himself.

He answered all the questions, though he felt mortified at having to do so.

Once he lost his temper, and asked, scornfully:

"Is a fireman a slave?"

The chief answered, coolly:

"Not a slave, but only one who voluntarily relinquishes all right over himself for the good of others."

The examination was over, and Dick was about to leave the superintendent's office, when a burst of laughter arrested his steps.

He turned, and saw all the probationers standing close to the office, and laughing as though something immensely humorous had taken place.

He realized then that the whole proceeding had been a burlesque, and that he had been made the butt of a good-natured practical joke.

Some would have been angry, but Dick was made of different stuff, and he laughed just as heartily as the others.

"Boys, you can score one for that. I am glad I have been the cause of some fun, only I wish I had been with you instead of being the butt."

The welcome which Dick received was a generous one, and when he entered the great hall of the gymnasium, he was surprised and pleased to see on a large canvas the words:

"WE DELIGHT TO HONOR
RICHARD MACY,
A TRUE HERO."

"Boys, I thank you, but I do not deserve such distinction."

"Yes, you do, and more than that. We are all proud of you."

"Yes," added the chief, "and if you continue in the department we shall be able some day to sing 'Hail to the Chief,' for you will be head of the department or my name is not——"

"Rats!"

The word was intended to be heard only by one person, but the chief had paused for the sake of emphasis before mentioning his name, and Guerdon's voice sounded all over the room.

Never was there a more disconcerted youth than Guerdon. He had not overcome his dislike of Dick, and when he heard him praised he gave utterance to the exclamation which was so expressive and vulgar.

"You are quite right, Mathew Guerdon; my name is not rats,

but you may be catching rats in the cellar of headquarters when Macy is chief of the department."

The speech did not conciliate Guerdon, and he was full of inward fever as he heard the praises of young Macy so constantly sounded.

"It is all because he is a parson's son," he muttered to Harry Brown, who did not like Macy overwell.

"You are wrong, Mat. Dick has proved himself brave."

"Fate gave him the opportunity, that was all."

And so this discontented grumbler talked on, finding something to carp at all the time. It is a strange freak of nature that produces such creatures. They are never happy unless grumbling, and never at peace with their fellows unless snarling or quarreling about them.

The routine of instruction was continued just as it had been before Dick and the others had their vacation.

A grand inspection and drill was to be held on an early day, and the instructors got the probationers to rehearse every detail.

There were fifty probationers, and they were divided into companies of ten each. At the inspection, each company would be required to do double duty; that is, they would have to man the engine, and show how they could work the hose, and then they would be required to go out with the hook and ladder truck and fight a fire by means of ladders and scaling devices.

A large number of influential citizens had been invited to watch the maneuvers, and the mayor of the city was to present prizes to the most expert and efficient.

Macy secured tickets for his own family, and for the Albrechts.

The day arrived, and the largest fire station was placed at the disposal of the probationers.

Dick was in the second company, of which he had been elected foreman.

The members of the company had to undress and lie down in the beds in the dormitory.

While they were lying there, awaiting the alarm, the citizens present were entertained by descriptions of work the men had to perform, and the expertness of the experienced fireman.

Then came the alarm.

The chains which closed the stalls dropped, and the horses ran to their places and stood awaiting the firemen.

Down the brass poles the young men descended, some doing up their clothes as they reached the floor.

Macy was to drive, and he vaulted over the wheel and strapped himself to the seat on the engine. He pulled the lines, the harness was free, and the engine was dragged into the street.

From the time the alarm rang to the moment the middle of the street was reached was fifty-five seconds.

"That is a good record," said the mayor.

"For probationers, yes; but it is, at least, five times too long for experienced men."

"In what time can the men of this engine house perform the same work?"

"They shall show you. Men of Twenty-six, to your beds!"

The order of the chief was obeyed, and a sufficiency of time allowed for the men to undress and get into the beds.

A foreman went through and saw that all were really undressed.

The alarm rang, the same routine was gone through, but before the mayor could finish a sentence the engine was in the street, the time being exactly fifteen seconds.

It seemed almost impossible that such an amount of work should be done in so brief a time, but the stop-watches proved the accuracy of the experiment.

The maneuvers with the hook and ladder brigade were the most interesting, for they included scaling high walls, crawling along roofs, leaping from window sill to window sill, and other daring, venturesome acts.

Macy's company won the award for the hook and ladder maneuvers, and came in second with the engine duty.

There were congratulations all around, and every one seemed delighted with the inspection except Mat Guerdon, and he grumbled, as usual, though no one minded his discontent.

After the termination of the course of instruction in the school, those who wished to enter the department had to give a month to active duty before they received their certificates.

Macy still loved the work, and entered his name on the roll, being assigned to the house where he had so distinguished himself, No. 5.

Dick was delighted to be with his old friends, and entered into the life just as though he had been there for years.

Guerdon was not with him, and that added to his pleasure.

CHAPTER VII.

IN DIREST PERIL.

"Fire! fire! fire!"

A young girl, clad only in a nightdress, patched and mended all over, had run to the top window of a lofty tenement house and given the alarm.

Then she ran back to an inner room and called lustily:

"Father! mother! Wake—please wake! The house is on fire!"

The room she had entered showed unmistakable signs of poverty. On a bed, destitute of sheets and other accessories of a comfortable couch, lay a man and a woman, fast asleep.

They were not undressed, the reason for which could be easily known from the strong smell of stale spirits which filled the room.

It was easy to see that both had fallen on the bed and sunk into a drunken sleep.

Was it possible that the clean, healthy-looking girl was their child?

Such was the fact.

Ellen Sanger maintained the family, paid the rent of the two rooms in the tenement attic, and clothed herself by selling papers on the streets. She was a hard-working girl, and one who never forgot that she had been born in a good house in the country,

amid scenes of comfort and prosperity. She was eight years old before her parents moved to the city and became slaves to the greatest tyrant the earth has ever known—alcohol.

She had seen her father lose his position and gradually fall into drunkenness. From bad to worse he went, and, sad to relate, his wife joined him in his excesses, until little Ellen had to find a way to keep the family from starvation.

"Fire! fire!"

She shook her father, and then her mother, but failed to wake them.

A fire had broken out on the third floor of the tenement house, and the commotion had roused Ellen.

She had run to the window and saw the flames burst forth from a back window.

She leaned out of her window, which was at the back of the house, and called as loudly as she could, and far louder than when she was trying to sell an "extra."

But only those in the rear of the house were likely to hear her.

She was so anxious about her father and mother that she never thought of those people in the front of the house, who might be in as great danger.

A door opened and a coarse voice demanded what she was making such a noise for.

"Oh, sir, the house is on fire!"

The man started downstairs, taking two steps at a time, and never stopping until he reached the street.

He had thought only of saving his own miserable life, and had left his wife and children to die, for all he cared.

Ellen rushed into the front room, and called to the woman:

"Mrs. McGinnis! wake up; the house is on fire!"

The poor woman clasped her youngest child to her breast, and, taking the hand of the elder, who was fast asleep on a mattress, she dragged it out of bed and followed her husband down the stairs, never stopping to thank Ellen for the warning.

Ellen had gone back into her own rooms, and tried to serve her parents as the woman had her child.

She pulled at her father's hand, and caught her mother by the arm, but could not move either of them.

She heard the snorting and puffing of the engines and the noise of the firemen as they tramped up the stairs, breaking down floors and smashing in doors in order to limit the fire to the smallest possible place.

"Is there any one upstairs?" she heard some one ask.

"No; they all skedaddled when the fire broke out."

"Help!" she cried, but her voice was drowned in the noise of the engines, the hissing of the water and the orders of the fire chief.

Never once did she think of trying to save her own life and leaving her parents to their dreadful fate.

She called and shouted, but that was all she did.

It would have been easy for her to descend the stairs and find safety, but she would not leave the drunken creatures whom she

She went to the front window, and saw a bright column of flame force its way through the window beneath her and shoot upward to the roof, almost scorching her face as it darted skyward.

She saw the firemen, and called to them, but none thought of looking to the attic, because the chief had been told no one was up there.

The walls were getting hot.

She leaned out of the window, but her hands were blistered with the heat.

What could she do to attract attention?

She ran back to see if her father was awake, but both were snoring, utterly unconscious of their impending fate.

Ellen dragged a heavy bench to the window, and lifting it up, let it drop on the sidewalk.

It just passed the head of one of the firemen.

"Jerusalem! but that was mighty queer," was the only thought he gave to the fallen bench.

Ellen saw that she had failed to attract attention in that way, and she thought of running downstairs and telling the firemen of her parents' danger.

She descended the narrow stairs which led from the fifth floor to the attic, and then saw, to her horror, that the stairs leading below were one mass of flame.

She saw men moving about, but none saw her.

Poor, brave, filial girl!

Her nightdress caught fire from a spark, and she saw it blaze up.

She threw herself on the floor, and extinguished the fire, but only did that, for the poor rag was destroyed.

A piece of carpet was lying in the doorway of one of the rooms.

She picked it up and wrapped it around her naked body. A piece of cord was lying on the stairs, and this she appropriated to tie her crude garment around her.

"Save my father!" she shouted. "Help! Help!"

Some women in a rear room on the floor below had stopped to dress, and were being carried down the ladders by the firemen.

When Ellen saw that, she knew there was no chance for her to walk down the stairs.

Again she ran up the rickety stairs.

"Father, wake!"

She shook the drunken sleeper, but he muttered something in his sleep and seemed to be more unconscious than ever.

"Perhaps it is better thus," she soliloquized. "We will all die together. Father, mother—oh! the thought is horrible! I do wish they would wake and kiss me once before we die!"

She roused herself once more, and ran to the front window.

Another engine had arrived on the spot.

Perhaps some of the new men would look up.

She was right. The men of Engine Company No. 5 looked up at the roof first thing, and then gradually lowered their eyes until they had inspected the whole building.

"What is that at the attic window?" asked Dick Macy.

"I do not see anything."

"Look—it moves."

The foreman glanced up at the window where Ellen stood, and then turned his gaze away.

"It's a piece of old carpet hanging out of the window," was his decision.

Dick could not resist taking another look, and as he did so, he cried out:

"It's a child! It lives! Hark! I hear some one crying for help!"

"Help! Save father and mother; never mind me!"

Dick was now sure that the piece of carpet had a voice, and that it was appealing for help.

"Hold on! I will save you and your father."

Ellen heard the words, and her nature could not stand the shock.

She fell back in a faint, and as she did so, the flames burst through the flooring, and she was enveloped in fire.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUMAN BRIDGE.

Dick acted without authority. It may have been the excitement of the occasion, or he may have thought red tape decidedly in the way at that moment, for he took the law into his own hands and did not wait for instructions.

He dashed into the burning tenement and made his way up the stairs to the third floor.

Then he found the stairs burned away, and the flame ascending the stairway, as though through a monster pipe.

He threw himself on the floor, and worked his way to the front of the house.

At the window he arose to his feet.

The air was refreshing, though he did not stay to inhale much, for time was precious.

He climbed through the window, and looked above, as he stood on the sill.

He saw that he could not reach the window above unless he could find a foothold at the top of the window.

The frame had been scorched, and in places burned away, but the daring young firefighter did not stop to think of the danger.

He stood on the top of the sash, and he felt in danger for the first time, for the sash was creaking and cracking under his feet.

He gauged the distance to the sill above, and then, without a fear, he sprang up and caught it.

Had he missed, he would have been dashed to pieces on the pavement beneath.

If his hands had slipped, even after he had caught the sill, he would have been killed.

For a moment he hung to that sill, only to gain his breath and renew his strength.

Like an athlete he drew himself up to the window and stood on the sill. He looked into the room, and fancied he might reach

the floor above from there, for the fire had burned a hole through the ceiling and had then been extinguished.

It was comparatively easy to reach the ceiling and crawl through it to the room above, but again he realized that if the child was to be saved he must make one more ascension from the outside.

He repeated his daring feat and reached the sill of the attic window in safety.

The intense heat of the fire, the clouds of smoke, the hissing of the steam caused by the playing of the water on the fire, almost took away his breath.

He looked for the child.

She had fallen on the floor just as the flames had burst through.

Clad only in a piece of dirty carpeting, she had been enveloped in flames, but the carpet had saved her life.

It was dirty and wet, two things which foiled the fire-demon, for, instead of blazing up, the carpet smoldered, and acted really as a shield against the flames.

Dick lifted Ellen in his arms and took her to the window.

How could he get her down?

He looked at the crowd below and wondered why no ladder had been raised.

Presently he heard his number called.

"Stay where you are and I will save you both."

Dick looked and saw a fireman's head sticking out of a window of the next house.

Fireman Norman had entered the next house and rushed up the stairs to the attic floor.

Opening the window, he stood on the stone sill outside and swung himself across until his other foot rested upon the coping of the window where stood Dick with his human burden, thus forming a straddling bridge.

His fingers just managed to reach the casing of the window, but the hold was very precarious.

One of his comrades had followed him up the stairs, and now leaned out of the window and grasped his leg, thus holding him in case of a slip.

Norman saw how dangerous was Dick's position, and he thought nothing of his own peril. He called to Dick:

"Can you get the girl out of the window?"

"Yes; but she will drop."

"Can you not rouse her?"

"No."

"Then you must risk it together, though I don't see how."

Fortunately, Ellen roused herself and began to ask whether she was alive or whether that was really death.

"You are alive, but we shall all soon be dead unless you do as you are told."

"I will do anything."

"Then lean out of the window and grasp that man around the neck."

"I shall fall."

"No, you won't; I will hold you. Quick! or we cannot save you."

"Save father and mother. Never mind me."

"We cannot save them until you are safe."

"Will you, then?"

"Yes, yes."

Dick gave her instructions, and Ellen sprang from the window, clutching Norman with such force that he nearly fell to the ground.

He swung her around to the window, and she was dragged in by his comrade.

"Now, then, Macy, your turn next."

"I must look after her folks first."

"Hurry, for I cannot hold much longer."

Dick left the window and made his way through the blinding smoke to the rear of the house.

As he reached the door of Ellen's room he could not refrain from giving utterance to a dreadful shriek.

He saw a sight from which the bravest would shrink.

Never had more fearful thing been witnessed.

Old Sanger had just awakened from a drunken sleep. All the noise and uproar, the fire and smoke, had not awakened him.

As he sat up in bed and saw the flames he shrieked for help. He raved and shouted for Ellen, whom he accused of deserting him.

It was at that moment that Dick reached the room.

The man was so impregnated with alcohol that his breath had caught fire, and Dick saw a living torch.

A column of blue flame was exuding from the drunkard's mouth and burning his face.

Dick thought how best to extinguish the flame, but the man was frantic and thought Dick had set him on fire.

He refused to allow the fireman to get near him, and when Dick tried to pacify him the poor idiot, whose senses had been destroyed by drink, rushed out of the room, and seeing the mass of fire below, deliberately leaped into it and was quickly burned to death.

Well might the great Bard exclaim:

"O that men should put an enemy into their mouths,
To steal away their brains!"

Dick turned back into the wretched apology for a bedroom and saw that the drunkard's wife was dead.

"What shall I do with her, Norman?" he asked, as he returned to the window.

"Carry her to the window and throw her out. I will call down and have the net for her."

Again Dick returned into the room. The heat was most oppressive, and he was getting enough punishment for one day.

He lifted the poor wreck of feminine humanity in his arms and carried her to the window.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Ay, ay, down with the body."

Gently he pushed the dead woman through the window, and in an instant he heard a heavy thud as her body reached the net.

Then he swung himself around to the other window by means of the human bridge made by Norman.

"Glad to know you are all right, Macy," said Norman as he was pulled into the room. "I could not have stayed there another moment."

"I don't see how you could; your legs must be made of iron."

"No, my boy, but of very painful flesh just now."

For ten minutes Norman had stood straddling from one window to another, his only hold being by the tips of his fingers on the casings of the windows and the grip which his comrade had on his leg.

"You did a noble thing, Norman."

"That's all right. Any more folks in there?"

"I think not, I hope not."

"Guess the fire is under control. Awful thing about the old woman."

"Worse about her husband."

"What of him?"

"He was on fire; a great spurt of flame was coming from his mouth. Mad with the pain, he jumped into the thickest of the fire, and of course could not be saved."

"We must get down."

The firemen, seeing that nothing more could be done upstairs, descended to the street.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE ENTERTAINMENT ENDED

"I am a demon of the fire!

I am arch fiend of the fire, and each blazing roof's my pyre,
And my sweetest incense is the blood and tears my victims weep.
How I revel on the prairies! How I roar among the pines!
How I laugh when from the village o'er the snow the red flame

shines,

And I hear the shrieks of terror, with a life in every breath;
How I scream with lambent laughter as I hurl each crackling
rafter

Down the fell abyss of fire; until higher, higher, higher,
Leap the high priests of my altar in their merry dance of death.
I am monarch of the fire—I am Vassal King of death,
World encircling, with the shadow of its doom upon my breath;
With the symbol of hereafter flaming from my fatal face.
I command the eternal fire! Higher, higher, higher
Leap my ministering demons like phantasmagoric lemans,
Hugging universal nature in their hideous embrace."

These lines, written by that strange and weird poet, Edgar Allen Poe, were recited by Dick Macy at an entertainment given by his company in aid of their mutual benefit fund.

"If Dick Macy ever gets tired of being a fireman he ought to go on the stage," said an old man who had sat entranced during the recitation.

"He will never be tired."

"Then you don't think it is a case of youthful enthusiasm?"

Mr. Albrecht thought for a moment before replying.

"No. There are men who are born firemen, just as there are born poets and warriors."

"Then you think it is his destiny?"

"I am sure of it. Did he not utter every word as though his whole soul was in the poetry?"

"Hush, there is some one going to speak."

"It is Macy's father."

The Rev. Dr. Macy had attended for the twofold purpose of helping forward a good cause and publicly giving his approval of the profession Dick had adopted.

"My friends, how true it is that, as the French express it, '*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*,' or to put it into English, that while man may propose, it is the great Creator who finally disposes of the lives and actions of men. And to put the same idea in the language of the Scotch poet, 'the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley.'"

"I had hoped that my youngest son would have been a lawyer. His brother is a clergyman, but he thought differently. He felt he had a mission, a work to do, and that work was the fighting of the terrible fire-fiend.

"Friends have said that they are sorry for me. Sorry that a clergyman should find his son in the ranks of the fire department, not as a commissioner, but as an active fireman. I have no need of their sympathy. We, his mother and his brother and myself, are proud of him.

"Labor is no disgrace. The man who turns up his shirt sleeves and works hard and faithfully, is a better man in the sight of Heaven than the wealthy idler who never did a day's work in his life."

"I would rather see my boy a fireman than a lazy member of society.

"There is this peculiarity about honest labor—it dignifies every one who performs it."

There was a commotion in the hall.

The speaker did not understand it.

Several of the firemen spoke together, then they got up and waited, standing.

Dr. Macy thought it was a mark of disrespect and felt annoyed.

Then every member of Company No. 5 hurried from the hall and out into the street.

Dick had been on the platform, but he left as hurriedly as the others; in fact, he was so disrespectful as to push before his father and, leaping from the platform, run from the hall.

"What does it mean?" asked his father.

"Fire!"

It was true. The alarm could be heard in the hall, and when it was first given the men knew it was not for them.

A few minutes and again the alarm was rung.

The men of No. 5 counted and once more settled down in their seats.

A third time the alarm was counted, and it was the ominous "Three Sixes." That meant that it was a call for every company to hurry to the fire.

It meant that a fire of more than ordinary magnitude had

broken out, and that the chief knew that heroic measures were necessary to effectually fight it.

Dick Macy had passed his probation and had become a regular fireman.

His family had withdrawn all opposition and had become reconciled to the idea of having a son in the fire department of the great city.

They became almost as great enthusiasts as Dick himself, and on the occasion of the benefit for the Mutual Aid Society, Dr. Macy had volunteered to speak.

After the Three Sixes had been sounded no one wanted to stay in the hall, for nearly all present had some one concerned with them in the department.

The entertainment broke up, and knots of the attendants talked over the great fires which had called out that ominous alarm.

But the majority started to go to the fire.

The lurid sky told of a great fire, but the distance was only a matter of conjecture.

It might be only a mile away, or it might be ten.

"I shall go with you to the fire," said Dr. Macy to the retired veteran fireman who had presided over the entertainment.

"Shall be proud to have your company, sir, though you may see sights you will regret."

"Perhaps so——"

"And your son——"

"Is in God's hands, sir."

The crowds increased in intensity as the main streets were reached. It really seemed as though all the city had turned out.

"Yes, sir, and 'all the region round about Jordan,'" quoted Macy, as he heard the remark about the immense number of people on the way to the fire.

A man, without hat, was running down the street away from the direction of the fire.

"Where is it?" asked the veteran.

"It's the great piano factory on the East Side, and two firemen are killed already, and more will follow."

It was a sickening thought, and especially for the clergyman who had his dearly beloved son in the ranks.

"Talk about your heroes," continued the man, who had stopped running because he had some one to talk to—"talk about your heroes! there isn't a hero to equal a fireman like that boy, bless him! who has just saved a poor old woman."

"That's my boy, Dick, I am sure."

CHAPTER X.

A HUMAN LADDER.

It seemed as though all the people had turned out to see the fire. The streets were crowded worse than on the occasion of a Barnum's Circus procession.

Ladies in evening dress joined the crowds as they wended their way to the great fire; men whose wealth reached into the millions jostled along through the streets side by side with men whose faces showed the signs of great hunger.

And why this interest?

There had been fires before which had not created such excitement—fires which had threatened to destroy half the city—yet this particular fire had caused more interest than all the others combined.

By the time Dr. Macy reached the fire the flames had embraced in their deadly grip the entire factory.

Every few moments the sounding board of a piano would snap with a noise like thunder, mingled with the strange twanging of the strings. Then a sound more like groaning would follow, until the strings had lost their power and had succumbed to the heat.

The sparks were borne by the wind to the adjacent buildings, and the firemen were unable to save the oil warehouse.

A barrel of oil had caught fire and rolled down the bank into the river. Then the people witnessed a strangely beautiful sight. The river seemed on fire. The oil floated on its surface, blazing with a beautiful brightness and causing every mariner near by to tremble for the fate of his craft.

A terrific explosion, louder than a dozen cannons, rent the air and made the clouds black with dense smoke.

Before the cloud of smoke had risen far the cry of some one in agony made the blood of the onlookers turn cold.

The floors had fallen in, and there were a hundred firemen in the great building.

How the men worked to rescue their fellows! Yet with all their desire to do so they did not neglect the fire itself.

"My boy, my poor boy!"

The ejaculation burst from Dr. Macy's lips as he heard the cry of agony, for he had not seen Dick, and he believed that he must be in the building.

"Have you any one in there?" asked a policeman.

"Yes, my son, my boy, my Dick."

"What is he?"

"A fireman."

"What engine?"

"No. 5."

"Did you call him Dick?"

"Yes; Richard Macy."

"God bless him! Dick Macy is one of Heaven's own noblemen," said the policeman, fervently.

"Is he in there?"

"No, indeed; No. 5 is on the other side saving the tenement houses, and let me tell you I saw your Dick, if he is yours, do such a deed that ought to win for him a medal."

The policeman was talkative, and as he had nothing to do but keep the people from pressing on the hose or getting too near the fire, he felt at liberty to indulge in a talk with the clergyman.

"What did he do?" asked the father, anxiously.

"Do? I will tell you. (Stand back there, can't you?) He looked up at one of the windows and saw a poor old woman crying and screeching. She was afraid that she would not be saved, and it did look very like that way, for the house was blazing and the ladders were all on the other side. Well, what

does Dick Macy do? (What are you scrounging there for? Can't you keep in your places? Some one pushing, eh? Well, push them back.) As I was saying, Dick says, 'We must make a ladder,' and blow me tight if the boys didn't at once agree. A big fellow as strong as an ox stood close up to the wall, while another climbed on his shoulders, the third man got on his shoulders, and so on until the men reached close up to the old woman; then Dick just climbed like a cat up the human ladder and reached the old woman. He lifted her out of the window. Talk about balancing! There ain't an acrobat that could have done it neater. He handed the old woman down to the next man, who lowered her to his underman, and so on until the ground was reached; then Dick came down, and the others followed."

"It was a brave act, and all deserve credit. My boy only did his part."

"That's all right, judge, but you see there wasn't a man in all that crowd that could have balanced at the top of that human ladder; that is where Dick Macy came in."

There was a suppressed groan from the crowd at that moment, for a body was carried out of the factory, and all saw that it was that of a brave fireman who had lost his life in trying to save others.

A new excitement attracted the attention of the crowd. A ship at anchor in the river had caught fire, and its whole rigging was in a blaze. It presented a pretty sight, though the sailors were in peril. One of the river engines set to work and threw the water over the sails and rigging.

A sailor, driven crazy by the fire, was up in the rigging, and when the first water was thrown up he dived into the river.

The man was stunned by his fall, and when he arose to the surface his body was surrounded by the burning oil.

One of the firemen on the boat leaped in after him, and he was again sinking.

It seemed strange to see the men apparently blazing while in the water, but there they were, one man swimming and holding the other up, and each enveloped in flame.

A line was thrown to them and the fireman caught it and was dragged to the fireboat. He had saved the sailor's life. Deeds of heroism were to be seen on every side, and the men behaved like the truest of heroes, every one.

CHAPTER XI.

DESERTED.

Dick Macy had deserted his post.

It was a gross offense, and one which would, under ordinary circumstances, lead to serious consequences.

His number had been called and he did not answer. The foreman sent to the place where he had been stationed, fearing that he might have been overcome with the smoke and unable to respond.

His duty had been a light one, merely to stay in one of the houses and watch for developments, so that in case the fire broke out in a new place he could give warning.

The place was deserted.

In vain the man called out the number, and then used the name. No answer was made, and it became clear that Dick Macy had deserted his post.

Two things had induced the foreman to give him greater latitude than the rest; he was a favorite and had won his way into the hearts of all his comrades, but that fact did not influence the foreman. It was because Dick had accomplished so many heroic life-savings that he was given latitude, and then the fact that he was a newcomer added to the liberty.

But he had never been known to have deserted his post before, and something out of the ordinary must have occurred.

One of his comrades accidentally came across a lot of clothes, which proved to be Dick's uniform.

That added to the mystery. Not only had he left his post, but he had also taken off his official clothes, and either gone out into the street clad only in his underwear, or else he must have appropriated a suit from one of the houses. In that case he was also an offender and liable to punishment.

At last the foreman was obliged to announce to the battalion chief that one of his men was missing. Word was given to all the companies, and special search was made whenever a chance offered.

By this time the fire had been got under control, and some of the companies were relieved from duty. The piano factory was a complete wreck, the oil warehouse had disappeared as though it had never existed, for not a trace, save only charred wood and ashes, remained to tell of its whereabouts.

All but one of the tenement houses had been saved, almost miraculously. Even the chief had declared that they must go, but he was wrong, for, except a few windows burned out, and a portion of one roof gone, the houses were safe.

What had become of Macy?

His company was one of the first to be relieved, and on the way to the engine house, and at the house, the men could talk of nothing else.

Dr. Macy had heard the rumor of his son's disappearance, and had hurried to the station to find out whether it was founded on fact.

"Yes, sir, he is missing. I cannot account for it, but I could swear that he is all right; that is, I mean that he never deserted."

"You alarm me, for, if he did not desert, then he must be in the ruins."

The foreman had not thought of that interpretation, and his face blanched even through the smoke and blackness which he had not had time to remove.

"I hope not, sir. I cannot see how he could be, for the house into which he was sent wasn't burned."

"But if he left the house?"

"Then I cannot say what would become of him; he might have gone——" The man was interrupted by the entrance of a messenger boy with a letter. "For me?" he asked.

"Yes, if you are the foreman; but there is fifteen cents to pay."

"There you are; but learn to speak more correctly."

"I'm not paid like a college teacher," mumbled the messenger as he left the building.

"Read that, Mr. Macy."

"The clergyman took the paper and saw that it was written by Dick. It was only a piece of packing paper, which had been inclosed in an old envelope and readdressed to the foreman of No. 5.

Written in pencil were the words:

"Do not worry about me. I ran away, but think I will be excused if I return alive, which is certain, as I think at present.
"Dick."

"What do you make of that?" asked the father.

"I'll be jiggered if I know. He has run away, that's certain, but he has a good reason for it."

"He speaks as though his life was in danger."

"That's nothing; he will turn up all right."

But all that night no further word was received from him, and even his best friends began to doubt that he would ever return.

Let us go back to the fire and follow Dick Macy in his desertion. We shall then see why he had acted so strangely, and what his object was in deserting his post.

When his company was ordered to the tenement houses Dick helped to serve the notices on the tenants to leave the buildings.

Then a thorough examination was made, and no living creature could be found in the tenements.

The object the firemen had was to prevent the places burning, and men were stationed on each of the floors to watch for the slightest indication of fire.

It was a duty that Dick did not like. He preferred the more active and dangerous work below.

An hour passed and the foreman thought one person in each house would be sufficient, and Dick was assigned to the first one. When the fire broke out it was thought that the houses must go, and the firemen broke a hole through the partition walls so that the houses would be easier of access.

Dick had walked through the house which was his especial charge, and saw that there was no sign of fire; he returned to the third floor, and answered the signal agreed upon of the fireman in the next house.

When he made his second inspection, after an interval of ten minutes, he thought he perceived the smell of kerosene. After thinking it over he came to the conclusion that the odor came from the oil warehouse beyond.

Later the odor became stronger, and Dick mentioned it to the man in the next house.

"Yes, I perceived it, but look out of the window, and you will see the river is all ablaze."

It was true! The oil floating down the river was blazing as it floated, and the strong odor was accounted for.

But Dick had a premonition that all was not right. He made a closer examination and found that one of the beds, in a room on

the second floor, had been liberally soaked with the inflammable oil.

That increased his suspicions, and he was about to communicate his fear to his foreman when he heard a closet door open.

He shrank back into the shadow of the large bureau in the room and waited.

He saw a man put his head out of the closet and look cautiously around. Seeing no one, he crept out of his hiding place and began to pour something out of a can on a pile of clothes which the family had thrown together, intending to take them out with them.

Dick's first thought was to jump out and tackle the incendiary, but he reasoned that the man would doubtless be armed, and would have the advantage.

So he waited and watched.

The incendiary, evidently thinking that he had done sufficient to secure the destruction of the building, lighted a cigar, and after taking a few draws let it drop, as though by accident, close to the kerosene-soaked clothes.

Laughing to himself on the success of his scheme, the man crept through the opening into the next house.

Dick had picked up the lighted cigar and thrown it from the window. He then followed the incendiary and saw him hide himself in a closet.

Macy waited for the fire-watcher to come into the room, when he would have told of the hidden firebug, and the two of them could have captured him.

There was no lock to the closet door, so Dick could not lock the man in, and could only wait for help to come.

But the watcher had been called away for temporary duty below, and Dick was alone in the house with the firebug.

An intense desire to capture the man took possession of Macy, and without thinking of the consequences he stripped off his fireman's uniform and put on a suit of clothes he found thrown across a bed.

While he was doing this he had his eye pretty close to a hole in the wall, through which he could watch the incendiary.

Satisfied with his evil work, the man crawled through a rear window and descended by the fire escape to the street, closely followed by Macy, in his citizen's clothes.

Dick had formed his own opinion of the firebug, somewhat in this wise:

"He would not risk his liberty for amusement, therefore he must have something to gain. He does not look like the owner of the houses, and must be in the employ of others. He is the agent; I must find the principal. They must have an object. What can that be? Money. Then either the owner or the tenants must be the employer of this man, and the insurance companies must supply the money after the fire."

Dick reasoned in this way all the time he was following the firebug.

He managed to keep out of sight, as far as he knew, and to do so had to give the man considerable headway.

The man was tall and had a habit of stooping, so that he was easily recognized, even in a crowd.

There was not much of a crowd in the streets at this time, for the church clocks had only just proclaimed the hour of one, so Dick had no difficulty in keeping him in sight.

He stopped at a saloon, one of those all-night saloons which are to be found in certain districts where men work in shifts night and day.

Dick Macy was puzzled how to excuse himself for entering a saloon, for he was not in the habit of frequenting such places.

A man came out with a pail filled with some steaming liquid which gave forth the aroma of coffee as he passed our young fireman.

That decided Dick; he would ask for coffee.

Entering, he saw a seat at a table close to the one occupied by the firebug.

"Can I have a cup of coffee?" he asked.

"Plain or with a stick in it?"

"Plain."

Dick answered without understanding the meaning of the phrase used to distinguish one kind from another, and thought he would be on the safe side if he said plain.

The man whom he had followed also took coffee, but with it a small glass of whiskey, and then Dick realized what the stick meant.

Before he had finished his coffee a man came in and joined the firebug.

He looked at Dick and was apparently satisfied, for he sat down, gave his order, and then uttered the one word:

"Well?"

"It is all right," answered the first comer.

"Sure?"

"Nothing can save the houses——"

"Hush, not so loud!"

"Not a creature saw, and the chances are no one would ever see. There was a young fellow supposed to be watching, but he never saw me, or I would have wrung his neck."

Macy trembled, and to hide his nervous feeling took a drink of the coffee. He called for a piece of pie and was told they had none; then he obtained a sandwich, stale, hard and warranted indigestible.

He heard the firebug detail all he had done, and then ask for some money.

"You had fifty——"

"I want a hundred more."

"I'll give you fifty, not a cent more. It isn't worth it."

"Not worth it? Why, you will net a few thousands."

"Will you take it?"

"No. I'll squeal first."

At the mention of the ominous word "squeal" the other man trembled, and his face became as white as that of a corpse.

"What good would that do you? You'd get sent up."

"Yes, but you'd get twenty years, while they'd let me off with five. See?"

"I'll make it seventy-five."

"I want a hundred and fifty."

"You said a hundred."

"Yes, but I've thought of the risk, and whenever I stop to think I always raise my price."

The other muttered something which sounded very like a profane ejaculation, but the next minute he had handed out a roll of notes to his tool and accomplice.

"I have a little job for you to-night."

"Where?"

"I'll tell you later. I must leave you now, for it must not be known that we were together."

Dick was wondering how he could find out the names and residences of these co-partners in crime, when they placed themselves in his hands.

CHAPTER XII.

TRIPPED UP.

"Stay! I will see you home, first. I want to make sure you are in your house," said the employer to his tool.

"I thought that we were not to be together."

"You are right. You will walk first and I will follow at a distance, and mind, no funny business."

Dick left the room first and sought a convenient place from which he could see the men leave the house.

Then the procession was formed. The firebug first, then, at a good distance, his employer, and last followed Dick, taking care to keep in the shadow.

When the firebug entered his house Dick made note of the number and hurried on after the principal in the crime.

At the corner of the next street he saw his quarry stop and speak to a young man.

Dick wished he had been nearer, but wishes were no use just then. He thought of a stratagem, and hurrying forward he came up to them just in time to hear the principal say:

"I don't trust Goldenstaab one bit; watch him."

"Please, can you tell me the way to First Avenue? I am a stranger, and at this hour it is difficult to find one's way about."

The answer was given and Dick moved away, but taking care not to lose sight of the man he was watching.

A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Where are you going, my boy?"

Dick looked up and saw the kindly face of an old man.

"Home," he answered.

"You have not been out all the evening, have you. I hope not."

"Yes, sir, I have."

"My boy, take warning in time. It is not fit to be on the city streets at night."

"Thank you, sir, for your warning. I had just asked that gentleman over there the way to First Avenue."

"Ah, I see; you asked my old friend, Abram Isaacher. A peculiar man, but as good as he is wealthy."

"Is he a good man?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Then why is he on the streets at night?"

"For some good purpose, depend on it."

Our hero thanked the old gentleman and walked away. He had learned the names of the principal and his tool, and he knew the residence of the latter. He thought it easy to find the dwelling place of Isaacher, for being wealthy the directory would furnish the evidence.

Dick found a means of sending the message to the engine house, and then prepared to spend the balance of the night in watching the residence of Goldenstaab.

He saw that there were lights in the house, and that the people had not retired. He also saw that there was a card in the window announcing "Rooms to Let."

He rang the bell and asked if he could have a room.

"If you can pay for it."

"How much?"

"A quarter."

"A room all to myself?"

"Yes."

Dick handed out the quartet and was shown into the parlor. He saw Goldenstaab sitting there, and knew that he was recognized.

"Hello! Have I not seen you somewhere before?" Dick asked.

"Don't remember."

"I have it. I was taking a cup of coffee at a saloon, for I had tramped a good way and was tired, and I saw you there."

"Perhaps you did."

"Well, then, let us shake, for we are old friends. It seems good to a country boy to see a person he has seen before. Do you hang out here all the time?"

"Yes."

Goldenstaab was grumpy and did not seem inclined to talk, but Dick rattled along like a country boy, and soon his artlessness had its effect, for the firebug began to answer and even to talk freely with him.

However, the conversation did not last long, for Goldenstaab said he was tired, and so he left the room and went to bed. Dick had no excuse for staying up, so he followed his example, finding to his pleasure that he was to occupy the next room.

The rooms were small and were made out of a large one divided by partitions reaching not quite up to the ceiling. Every word uttered in one could be heard in all the others on that floor.

Dick determined he would keep awake, for he had none too good an opinion of the place, and was afraid he might meet with some unsavory adventure.

Nature, however, gave way and he fell asleep. How long he slept he did not know, but when he awoke the sun was shining through the front window, and its light could be seen over the partitions in all the rooms.

He heard voices, and sat up in bed to listen. He had been careful not to undress, so he was ready for any emergency.

"I tell you, he is a plant," he heard Goldenstaab say in a low voice.

"I don't believe it."

"All right; you have been warned."

"But what can he find out?"

"You can answer that best. I've nothing to fear."

There was nothing more said for some time, and Dick wondered what the speaker had meant.

He was vexed with himself at having slept so long, and was doubtful whether he had done the right thing in deserting his post to go on such a wild-goose chase.

He heard Goldenstaab go downstairs, and thought it was time to follow him.

In the dining-room he saw only two men seated, one of whom was the firebug.

Goldenstaab welcomed him effusively, and assured him that he had enjoyed the conversation the previous night.

Dick agreed that the pleasure was mutual, and asked Goldenstaab and his friend to breakfast with him.

They declined, but agreed to sit at the same table, telling him that it was a rule of the house for each to pay for himself.

"Big fire last night."

"Yes, I saw the glare," answered Dick.

"Didn't you go?"

Dick did not like to answer, and turned the question away by asking:

"Did you?"

"No, I never go to fires; don't like them."

The breakfast was brought and Dick drained the cup of half-hot coffee almost as soon as it reached the table, and called for another.

But before the second came he began to feel dizzy. He could not account for the feeling.

Everything whirled around and he found himself catching hold of the table for support.

He was losing consciousness fast. Goldenstaab suggested that the air would revive him, and offered to lead him into the yard.

Dick accepted the offer, but he remembered no more until waking, some time after, he found himself locked in a dirty, dark and noisome cellar.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

"Well, I must have been green to trust the very man I was hunting so nicely," Dick muttered to himself when he found he was securely imprisoned in the cellar.

He felt his way around the place, but could find no means of exit. Every wall seemed as though it was without break, and Dick wondered whether he had been bricked in a vault to die. He was romantic, and imagined that the fables of old-time romances were being re-enacted in the present.

He felt in his pockets, hoping to find some matches, but the pockets were empty, and he remembered that he had appropriated some other person's clothes.

When he found that he was without the means of obtaining a light, he called for assistance, but no sooner had he done so than he philosophically reasoned that his appeal would be in vain.

"Am I to die here?" he asked himself, and answered with emphasis: "No, murders are not committed in this day for so small an excuse. I suppose I shall be kept here until Goldenstaab has drawn his money and escaped."

Dick sat down on the floor, determined to reserve his strength for the hour of need.

He thought over all that had occurred since he left school, and recalled the jolly times he had there. With some bitterness he remembered how some had cut him when he became a fireman.

"It was pretty tough for them, educated as they have been, to think work a disgrace. I wonder now why it is respectable to be a lawyer, and disreputable to be a fireman? The lawyer works with his brain, and if he is going to be successful he must often take up the side he knows is wrong, and must do his best to make people think it is right. I could not do that. A lawyer is paid for what he does, so is a fireman. Hello, I think I hear a noise, and, as the play says, 'I must dissemble,' for I shall have need of my wits."

There was a noise, and what is more to the point, it was at the entrance to the cellar. After some considerable shuffling about and working with what appeared to be a rusty lock, the door was opened.

Dick looked up, and was surprised at two things—first, at the place where the door was situated, for it was nowhere near where he had been searching, and more than all was he surprised to see that his visitor was Goldenstaab.

Dick was puzzled to know why the firebug had made him a visit; perhaps it was to purchase his silence.

"Hello, young fellow! How do you feel now?"

"Rested," answered Dick, determined not to lead the conversation.

"It was rather fortunate that you fainted just when you did."

"Was it?"

"Yes, though I cannot understand why you did."

"Can't you?"

"No. Are you subject to such faints?"

"No."

Goldenstaab was disappointed in Dick. He expected that the young fellow would question him, but Dick was on his guard and waited for the firebug.

"I suppose you wonder why you were placed in this cellar instead of a bed?"

"Naturally."

"I might evade the issue by saying that this is an all-round house; the beds are occupied during the day by those who are at work during the night, so no sooner do the night sleepers get up than the bed is remade and another man takes his sleep."

"Indeed; is that the truth?"

"It is, but that is not the reason why you were brought here."

"No?"

"Father Abraham! why don't you ask the reason?"

"I suppose you will tell me if you want me to know."

"You're a cool 'un. I will tell you. You are known."

"Known!"

"Yes. You see, there are some queer fish sometimes in this house, and when you fainted it happened just lucky for one of them, a man that wanted to get out of your way."

Dick was more than ever perplexed. He did not know of any one who wanted to get out of his way, unless it was the firebug, and he had deliberately returned to Dick's presence. True, Dick was in his power, but why had he not escaped while he had the chance?

Seeing that Dick made no reply, the firebug continued:

"No good can be done by you squealing about being shut up here, but your influence would be impaired by the knowledge of the easy way you walked into a trap."

"Well?"

"So if you promise not to tell any one about this little unpleasant resting place I will let you go."

"Indeed!"

"Don't sneer. You think we don't know you! now I will prove it. You came here ~~to~~ shadow some one. He was wanted by the police. He did not want to make their acquaintance, so when you fainted he skipped."

"Who skipped?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are a good up. I wouldn't wonder if you are superintendent of police before you are thirty. Well, I wish you well."

"So he has gone, has he?"

"He has, and it would puzzle you to find him. I tell you he was shaking in his shoes all the time till the ship left the dock. But he is safe now."

Dick was befogged. He knew that Goldenstaab did not suspect that he was the one watched. What had the other done? Was he a firebug?

"Where has your friend gone?"

"He was no friend of mine, only a casual acquaintance; he could play a good game at cards, and his equal could not be found at checkers, a game I am fond of, but that was all. You ask where he has gone. I would like, to oblige you, but I said I would not tell, and I won't. Not that it would matter, for there is no extradition for his little peccadillo."

"What crime, I mean what indiscretion, was he guilty of committing?" Dick asked innocently enough, but Goldenstaab appeared to think it a joke. He laughed and poked Dick in the ribs, and laughed again.

"I only helped to carry you here; that is no crime, but I do not want to get into any bother over it, so, if I release you, you will not say anything about this cellar?"

"No."

"Good; I know you can be depended on. Your word has never been doubted, and I will not make the first to doubt it. Follow me."

Dick did not know but that he was being led into another trap, but he wanted to be free, and it was worth the risk. He followed Goldenstaab up some steps, and in another moment they were in a small yard at the rear of the house. At the end of the yard was a gate, and Goldenstaab unlocked that door and allowed Dick to pass through.

"Good-by, Monsieur Tornure, the sleuth," exclaimed the firebug, as Dick walked along the side street.

Tornure was a young man of French descent who had recently joined the detective force, and had accomplished the most wonderful captures. It was quite an honor to be mistaken for him. But Dick wondered how it all came about.

An hour later he was at Engine House No. 5, and as he entered the door a shout went up from those present.

"Dick Macy! Dick Macy! Where have you come from?"

The men slid down the brass poles and swarmed around the young hero, greeting him as though he had come from the dead.

"Where have you been?"

"What made you run away?"

"Are you going to resign?"

"You will have to be on your defense, for you will have to stand trial."

"Never mind, Macy, we are all glad to see you."

The captain entered the house at that moment, and he looked sternly at Macy.

"This won't do. Where have you been?"

"Captain, I deserted, but I think I can show good cause for it. Can I see you privately?"

"I do not know about that. It may appear to be a breach of the rules of the department."

"I can satisfy you that I shall be thanked instead of being blamed, only give me a chance."

"I will hear you."

"Thank you; I am sure you will not regret it."

CHAPTER XIV.

INVESTIGATION.

"The piano factory was set on fire by an incendiary," said Dick, as soon as he was in the captain's private office.

"Was it?"

"Yes, and it was only part of a scheme to burn down the entire block, for the sake of gain."

"If you have nothing better to tell me than that, I am sorry for you. I would advise you to resign and to save a trial and dismissal."

"I know appearances are against me, but what I am stating is the truth."

"You evidently do not know that the owner of the piano factory is one of the richest and most honorable men in the city."

"I know that, and he is the greatest loser, but he will tell you that a few days before the fire he sold three pianos and allowed them to be stored in a rear room, and that the purchaser brought some other things there of which the piano-maker did not know the value."

"Well?"

"The contents of that room were insured."

"But the pianos were paid for."

"Yes; but they cost three hundred dollars each, and were insured for six hundred dollars each, and the other contents were insured for ten thousand dollars, and were only worth a hundred or so."

"Admit that the profit would be ten thousand, would that be enough to induce any man to take the risk?"

"Yes; especially when he was the owner of the next two or three houses, which were heavily insured."

"Macy, I am sorry, but I fear that the excitement has unhinged your reason. Mr. Isaacher is one of the most respected men in town."

"Is he the owner?"

"He is."

"Who owned the furniture in the houses?"

"He did in two; in the third the furniture belonged to the tenants."

"Now, I will tell you something. I saw a man pour kerosene on the beds and floors of two of the houses, and then drop a lighted cigar close to a lot of saturated clothes."

"But the houses were not burned."

"Only one; I prevented the others taking fire. I changed my clothes, borrowing these, which I found on the bed, and followed the firebug."

"Did you have him arrested?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I wanted evidence, and I know where he is."

"I suppose you know his name and address?"

"I do; it is easy to find. His name is Goldenstaab."

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, that is the name of the agent of the property!"

"I thought he knew his way about well. Now I know all I have said to be true. I slept in the next room to Goldenstaab, and he talked in his sleep. He accused Issacher of keeping back

the money promised, and said he would turn state's witness against the property owner unless he got more money."

"Wait a moment."

The captain went to the telephone and called up the chief of the department. To him he told part of Dick's story, and the chief ordered Dick to be kept away from every one until the chief arrived.

"Don't let him see any one, and be sure no one sees him."

There was a small office leading off the captain's, which was reserved for the battalion chief. In this office Dick was placed, and the door locked.

It was done only in time, for Abram Issacher entered, and in the most pleasant manner bade the captain a good-morning.

"I congratulate you, captain, on saving three of my houses, though I think I shall pull them down and build the entire row more modernly."

"Pay better, I have no doubt. It might have been a good thing if they had all been burned, eh?"

"In one way, yes; I should have got the insurance, and that would have helped me to rebuild. But think of the poor tenants in the third house who would have lost their all! for they were not insured."

Issacher spoke so sympathetically that the captain could not believe him guilty of deliberate incendiarism.

"Your loss was pretty heavy as it was?" queried the fireman.

"Yes, money cannot compensate me. Why, do you know, in that room in the factory I had three new pianos, but they were insured, but there was a genuine Stradivarius violin, for which I had been offered ten times its weight in gold. And then there were oil paintings which were valued at ten thousand dollars; one was a genuine Reubens, and another was a Joshua Reynolds portrait. I was going to give one of them to the city."

"An irreparable loss."

"Yes; the Rubens I paid five thousand dollars for——"

"How came such valuable things to be stored in that warehouse?"

"You may well ask. I will tell you. I had just commenced altering my house, and when the representative of the city had inspected the paintings and declared them genuine, he advised me to store them somewhere where they could be safe until the workmen were through at my house, and as I had hired a room at the factory, and the firm had a private watchman on the premises, I thought they would be safe."

"And they were burned?"

"Yes. The insurance adjuster is swearing at the amount of insurance, but that is not my fault. The company knew the value of the pictures and accepted a higher rate of premium because of the risk."

"What amount will the company lose?"

"I don't mind telling you, captain, but I would not tell every one. The insurance on that room was only ten thousand dollars! the value of the things would be five thousand more than that. Then I had put a lot of new furniture into the first house, the one that was burned, and that was insured. It is very unfortunate that the fire should have occurred at that time."

"Very. What can I do for you, Mr. Issacher? For I see that my duty will soon claim all my time."

"I merely called to ask you to give me a good word with the adjuster and the salvage people, for you have known me a long time."

"I will tell them that."

"I felt sure you would, and I shall not forget the men who risked their lives to save my property when all is settled."

When the wealthy property owner left the building, the captain murmured to himself:

"I think he is speaking the truth. He evidently did not deceive the insurance people."

He opened the door, and called Dick to him.

"Did you hear what Issacher said?"

"Every word."

"And you now know that you were mistaken?"

"Excuse me, captain, but I am more certain I was right."

"Why are you so obstinate?"

"Call it obstinacy if you like; you are captain, and my superior; but you have no proof that those paintings were in the room."

"Where else are they?"

"Perhaps shipped to Europe before this."

"I am afraid you are a doubting Thomas; but here comes the chief; now, be careful, for he has the power to make or break you."

Dick Macy was not at all abashed. He felt sure he was right, and he meant to continue in that belief until he was shown to be wrong.

At first the chief was inclined to be haughty, and to treat Macy with severity, thinking that the story was gotten up as an excuse for his desertion; but when he had told his story, and also called on the captain to tell of the interview with the wealthy property owner, he hesitated in his opinion, and asked Dick if he would go with him to the district attorney's office and swear to his story.

"That is what I thought of doing, but I thought my duty was to report to the department first."

"You did quite right. But do not think that anything you can say will prevent you being tried for deserting your post, which is a serious offense for a fireman to commit."

Macy waited in an outer room while the district attorney was conferring with the chief, and he began to be impatient.

The law officer of the city was stern and almost insulting to the young fireman until the story had been taken down and sworn to; then he relaxed, and asked Dick what proof could be obtainable.

"I should send for Goldenstaab, and tell him you knew all; that if he made a full confession, he would be accepted as State's evidence, and would not be prosecuted."

"He is too old a bird to be caught like that."

"Ask him point-blank where the Rubens was shipped to, and then follow it up sharply by the question as to the amount of money Issacher was to pay him if the entire row of houses burned down."

"I will do it. There can be no harm done. You must stay here, at least for a time, and remember that you have sworn to the statement, and can be sent up for perjury if you are proved to be lying."

"I have no fear, sir."

The district attorney rang up the chief of police over the telephone, and asked him to come to the office at once.

In a very few minutes the chief was there, and heard the story as told by Macy.

"This is serious; I have long had suspicion that there was a band of firebugs at work, but have not been able to trace them."

"You think this may give you the clew?"

"Yes; for this man, Issacher, is interested in many places which have been burned down recently. Generally, he was only a sleeping partner. Now we shall know the truth. Let me examine this Goldenstaab."

In a few minutes detectives were sent to arrest Goldenstaab and to shadow Issacher, to make sure that he did not escape.

Goldenstaab had no idea for what he had been arrested; he thought that it was on account of his friend's escape, and that he had nothing to fear.

When he entered the chief's office, and was told to be seated, he felt his spirits rise, for the chief was so very courteous. He did not know that the chief was very like a cat with a mouse, playing with it until he was ready, and then showing sharp claws where before had been velvet-like paws.

"Sorry to have to send for you, Mr. Goldenstaab, but we all have annoyances at times. I am in a little difficulty, and thought you could help me out."

"Shall be very pleased to assist you, sir."

"I knew it. By the way, Mr. Issacher was going to give a very valuable painting to the city; what was it, do you know?"

"I think he called it a Rubens, but I am no judge of paintings; it seemed to me to be a soiled and dirty old thing, not worth a cent."

"I am afraid you do not appreciate the old masters. Many do, and some think the painting a gem. Was it not lucky that it was not stored in the burned building?"

"Yes; if it was valuable, though——"

"Just so. By the way, Mr. Goldenstaab, if it is not an impertinence, why did you leave the house next the factory?"

"I never lived there; it was the third house, and Mr. Issacher had a chance to rent the whole floor, so I gave up my hall-room and——"

Goldenstaab paused; there was something in the questions he did not like, but the chief was all suavity.

"It would have been a good thing for you if all the houses had been burned down, would it not?"

"For me?"

"Yes; Issacher wanted to rebuild modern flats, and of course would have paid you for the loss of your job. Let me see, how much were you to get if all were destroyed?"

Goldenstaab turned deathly pale. His knees shook so that he could not balance his hat on them, as he had been doing.

"Come, now, Mr. Goldenstaab, you know that you were not quite alert when you poured the kerosene on the beds and dropped a lighted cigar close to the oil-saturated things."

"Do you suspect——"

"No, I do not suspect. I know all, and can send you to Sing Sing for thirty years, at least."

"Mercy! Mercy!"

"It is because I want to save you that I sent for you. I do not think you are bad at heart, and if you had a chance you would never get into such trouble again."

"Indeed, I would not!"

"Then make a full confession. Mind, I have evidence against you and Issacher, but, only out of a desire to serve you, I am willing to give you a chance to save yourself. Will you make a confession?"

"Shall I be prosecuted?"

"No; I will see to that."

"Then I will tell all."

"The paintings were not in that room?"

"No. They were sold to a man going to Europe."

"And the furniture and bric-a-brac were of no value?"

"A hundred dollars would have purchased everything save the pianos, and they were worth——"

He paused.

"Why do you pause?"

"I was wondering if old Issacher had managed to get them out, as he did the other things."

It is needless to recount all the examination and the disclosures made by the agent of the property owner.

It was clearly demonstrated that Issacher had planned a great coup, by which he would have got enough insurance to pay for the building of several fine, modern flat houses, which would have netted him a large income.

Abram Issacher was arrested, and indignantly threatened the law officers with actions for false imprisonment, until he learned that his agent and tool had made a full confession; then he changed his tactics and sought liberation through the agency of bribes.

Even had the district attorney been willing to allow such an enemy of society to escape, the insurance companies would not let him relax his vigilance, and so the wealthy property owner was committed to await the action of the grand jury, and the bail was fixed at so high a figure that it was impossible for him to obtain it.

CHAPTER XV.

DISCIPLINED.

Though Dick Macy had accomplished so much in the unearthing of the firebugs, he was ordered to stand trial for desertion.

The fact that not only Issacher, but several others, had been arrested for incendiarism, through Dick in the first place and the confession of Goldenstaab in the second, was not enough to excuse the gross breach of discipline.

It was argued before the fire commissioners that if a man was allowed to leave the post of danger, to hunt down a criminal, the efficiency of the department would be impaired, and property and even lives would be sacrificed.

For the defense Dick's counsel, and he had procured one of the most able and learned, argued that in the case before the commissioners the action of the accused had actually saved property, and that by the technical desertion he had rendered the public a most valuable service.

Dick refused to allow any evidence in his favor to be submitted, save that the records of the department might be searched to find whether there had been any bad marks against him during the short time he had been in the service.

The judgment was a strange one, and most paradoxical. Dick was declared guilty of desertion while on duty, and at the same time complimented for his clever detective work.

The president thanked him for exposing the firebugs, and admitted that he was compelled to punish him.

Dick knew that he was right in the decision, for it was no more excusable for a fireman to desert than it was for a soldier in the face of the enemy.

The punishment was unique, Dick being suspended for one month, but accorded full pay.

In other words, he was to receive a month's holiday at the expense of the city. The only punishment was in the future, for the month would lengthen the time before he could retire with a pension, and would perhaps slightly retard promotion.

When Dick left the judgment room he returned to the engine house, where the men were waiting to condole with him on his suspension or congratulate him on his acquittal, whichever might be the case.

"What shall you do, Dick?" asked the captain.

"Go home for a month."

"It's a rascally shame, and the Comms know it, only they couldn't do anything else. Perhaps they will pardon you before you have a chance to get away."

"I do not complain. I would rather have been acquitted, of course, but I do not consider the suspension a disgrace."

"I should think you didn't."

Dick wrote to the Albrechts, who had returned to Boston, but he had not mailed the letter an hour before a telegram came from Mr. Albrecht:

"Have just read trial as briefly told in evening paper. If you are free come over and spend month with us."

Pleasant as was the invitation, Dick felt that he would rather be at home, and so he wrote to his father that he would be in New Lenster the following evening.

What a homecoming! Surely it was no criminal, no offender against the laws, that was expected on that train.

When Dr. Macy told the postmaster that Dick was coming home on the seven-thirty train from the city, he did the very best thing possible if he wanted every one to know it, for the postmaster was a gossip, and he was a great admirer of Dick Macy.

He acted as though Dick's merit was to his credit. He argued: "Is not young Macy a New Lensterite? Ought we not to be proud of our boys? And who should be more proud than the postmaster?"

So this worthy official spread the news all round that Macy was coming home.

The news reached the academy, and Jack Stead at once proposed that all the boys should be at the station to welcome their late fellow student.

Jack's suggestion was agreed to with acclamation, and when he proposed that the moment the train was sighted the school yell should rise above the noise of the engine, he was voted a real good fellow.

An alarm was sent out from both fire companies for the purpose of mustering all hands to be at the station when the seven-thirty train arrived.

But there was another active man in New Lenster, and that was Mr. Newman, whose son, Bertram, was at the head of a very excellent volunteer band. Newman suggested that it would be a good idea if the band was at the station to play something appropriate, and Bertram said he thought something like "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," would about fill the bill.

If Dr. Macy knew of these preparations, he was able to assume a very excellent appearance of innocence, for he said not a word, but hinted that his wife and family might go down to meet the train.

Exactly at seven-thirty the train entered the station and immediately the cry arose:

"N-E-W-L-E-N-S-T-E-R. Rah! Rah! Rah! D-I-C-K-M-A-C-Y. Rah! Rah!"

That cry had not died away before the band struck up a lively air, and as Macy stepped on the platform the shouts went up from his friends which showed that, though he returned in official disgrace, he was accounted a hero, and was honored by his friends and neighbors.

After clasping his father's hand and kissing his mother, Chief Dempsy caught him by the arm.

"Richard Macy, the Fire Department of New Lenster welcomes you," he shouted, "and hopes to have you go to your house on the good engine of the Hose Company, or the wagon of the Hook and Ladder Company."

"I am not worthy of such honor," answered Dick.

"And the band will lead the way," young Newman shouted.

"And the New Lenster Military Academy will follow close behind."

The "Professor," as all called Jack Stead, took the lead in the academy and marshaled his men with all the skill of a military officer. The boys had their rifles and the officers their swords, and as they fell in line they looked like gallant heroes.

It would never do to go the nearest way to the rectory, and as Dick was in the hands of his friends he did as they wanted.

The procession wended its way through the principal streets and halted before the post office, where the postmaster was waiting to give a welcome, in the name of the Federal Government, whose representative he was, to the young citizen of New Lenster who was brave as a fireman and skillful as a detective.

Say what he would, Dick could not make the people believe he was in disgrace; all looked upon the month's suspension as a reward for his good work.

At last the people dispersed, and Dick was at home with his family. He was glad of the quiet after the excitement of the last two hours.

"Dear me, Dick, I quite forgot; you have had no supper."

"No, mother, but I do not think I could eat any."

"That won't do; you must eat. I will order supper at once."

"I suppose you forget, my dear," said the rector, "that we have not had our suppers; we waited for Dick."

"So we did; well, we will not forget any longer."

The maiden who was parlor maid and waitress knocked at the door, and handed in a letter for Dick.

It was in a dainty envelope, highly perfumed, and seemed to be addressed by a lady. He opened the envelope and saw that the letter was unsigned. He read it, then threw it down, but picked it up again, and with trembling hand passed it to his father to read.

"Hello, my boy; anonymous letter, eh? And a threat."

"It seems so, father. Do not tell mother."

Fortunately Mrs. Macy had left the room to look after supper, and so did not see the anonymous letter. It read:

"If you value your life you will not appear against the men accused of incendiarism. Their conviction means death to the witnesses against them. Be warned in time. Their friends are desperate."

"What shall you do, Dick?" asked Dr. Macy.

"My duty, father."

"Brave boy; but we must look into this thing, for you must not incur risk."

"Father, you have always taught me to do my duty, no matter what the consequences might be."

CHAPTER XVI.

THREATS.

"We must think over this matter and decide what is best," said Dr. Macy to Dick, after rereading the anonymous letter.

"Why think at all, father? There is but one thing to do. You have often said: 'Take no notice of anonymous slander.' Is not that so?"

"Yes, and in the main I agree with the advice, but this is exceptional."

Dick laughed rather sarcastically.

"Oh, I see! When the slander or threat touches ourselves it is different."

"You are right in your rebuke. But here comes your mother; say nothing to her about it."

A good warm supper is always pleasant, but under the circumstances it was doubly so to Mrs. Macy and Dick. His father was too much worried to enjoy eating.

The sound of a band was heard, and the tones grew louder and

stronger until all were convinced that the New Lenster band had returned to serafade Dick.

When the music ceased Bert Newman entered and told Dick that the band wanted him to spend an hour with the members at their rooms.

"To-night?"

"Yes; do not refuse us; we are so proud of our brave fire laddie."

"What shall I do, father?"

"Go, by all means; to-morrow night you have to be with the firemen."

"I see, the band wanted to get one ahead of the fire laddies; well, I will come."

Half an hour later Dick was on his way to the bandroom, and had already forgotten the threatening letter, when he was reminded of it by a messenger boy from the Western Union Telegraph accosting him.

"Mister Macy, I have a telegram for you."

"For me?"

"Yes; all charges paid; please sign the book."

"Wait a moment until I read it; there may be answer required."

Dick tore open the orange-colored envelope and read the inclosure. His face paled slightly as he saw the lines, for the telegram was but a new threat.

"You will have heard our resolve by letter; we mean every word."

"There is no answer," Dick said, and the boy left him.

Dick hesitated a moment, and then went to join the members of the band, who were waiting for him.

After spending a pleasant evening with his old friends, he returned home and showed the telegram to his father.

"This is serious, Dick. I will see my lawyer about it in the morning."

Dick advised delay, thinking that when the friends of the firebugs, if they were responsible for the messages, saw that he was not frightened, they would resort to more open threats and place themselves in reach of the law.

Two days passed, and Dick was the social lion of the little town, and was petted until his father declared that he would be spoiled.

On the morning of the third day Dick received a message from a lawyer, who, while residing in New Lenster, had an office in the city. He was asked to call on the lawyer at his residence as early as possible after the receipt of the note.

Dick started off at once and found Lawyer Quigg at home.

"I am glad that you have been so prompt; I have a communication from a client, and he is in a hurry for an answer."

"Does his communication refer to me?"

"Yes; you know Oliver Kingsley?"

"The traveler and author?"

"Yes; well, he is my client. He is going on a tour through Europe, but he intends taking a circuit of the world; in fact, he starts from San Francisco, does China, Japan, India, and then on through Asia into Europe."

"What a pleasant trip; I should like to take just such a one."

"I knew it. I knew it. That is just the very thing for Dick Macy, I said, as soon as I heard of it. So we may call it settled, eh?"

Macy looked at the lawyer and wondered whether he was off his base, as he expressed it, but the lawyer was busy writing, as though everything was settled.

"What is settled?" asked Dick.

"Ah, good joke. I thought you knew. Well, well, some are born lucky and others have luck thrust upon them, as the poet says."

"Will you explain yourself, Mr. Quigg?"

"Just so. Well, as I told you, Oliver Kingsley is going around the world, a trip, he says, of three years' duration, and he wants you to go with him."

"Wants me? Why, I never spoke to him in my life."

"Just the very reason; he says that he has heard of you, and if you will only go he will be pleased to make you his private secretary, and——"

"How did he hear of me?"

"Every one has heard of you, my dear fellow, and he wants to add your reputation to his own."

"When does he start?"

"Ah, that is just what I am coming to. He will not go for a month, but he wants you to leave here to-morrow and go to Frisco to arrange some matters for him; I have been intrusted with all the arrangements."

"To leave to-morrow! I really could not do it, even if I could get released from my duties in a month."

Dick was wavering. He loved the fire duties, but he had a strong ambition to travel, and the opportunity was not one to be despised.

"I will let you have until this afternoon to consider."

"Very well; I will then give you an answer."

Dick thought he would go to the city and see the captain of Engine No. 5, and perhaps the chief; then he would be able to tell his father something definite.

So instead of returning home he made his way by the first train to the city, and fortune favored him, for he was stepping out of the train when from another car there stepped a man that Dick was sure was the celebrated traveler, Oliver Kingsley.

He had seen the portrait often, and on the strength of that recognition he accosted the traveler:

"Mr. Kingsley, I believe?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"I am Dick Macy, of New Lenster."

"The young fireman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very glad to know you; what can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"I thought——"

"Step in my carriage; we can talk as we drive, and I have thought I would like to know you. Can you spare the time?"

"Yes, sir. I have seen Mr. Quigg."

"Excellent man, Quigg, though he is a lawyer. Did he mention me?"

"Yes, sir, he made me an offer in your name."

"In my name?"

"Yes; are you not going around the world?"

"I am, I shall start in about a month."

"So he told me."

Dick was perplexed. Why did not Kingsley say something about the offer he had instructed the lawyer to make? It was evident that the traveler was as much at sea as Dick. To relieve the monotony he asked:

"Are you interested in travel?"

"Very much, sir. It has been my ambition to travel over the globe."

"It has its attractions, I admit, but there are drawbacks as well."

"Please, sir, there seems to be some misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding?"

"Yes; did you not want me?"

"Want you?"

"Yes, to be your private secretary?"

"No; why, bless me, what could have put that into your head?"

Then Dick knew there was something wrong, and he told the traveler all that had taken place between the lawyer and himself.

"All wrong, save one thing. I asked Quigg if he could find some one who had a month to spare to go to 'Frisco on a little business for me, and he said he would try and find some responsible party; that was all."

"Then I was not to go around the world with you?"

"No; I could not afford such an extravagant luxury, much as I should enjoy the pleasure of a companion traveler."

Dick saw that it was part of the scheme to get him out of the department and away from the city so that he would not be on hand to give evidence against the firebugs.

"Then all you wanted was an agent in San Francisco?"

"Not exactly an agent, but there are many things I wanted to investigate, and I knew I should not have time; but excuse me; I don't think you could have done what I wanted. It was a lawyer that I expected would be sent."

Dick thanked Kingsley and bade him adieu, glad that he had made his acquaintance, and yet sorry that so distinguished a man should have been used for so vile a purpose.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DESPERATE RISK.

When Quigg found that Dick would not fall into the trap he admitted that the private secretaryship was only a bait, for he wanted Dick to go to 'Frisco, and his explanation was so plausible that Macy half believed he had been mistaken.

The district attorney was determined to push forward the trials at once, and Dick was notified that he must be ready to attend.

How important his evidence was the lawyer pointed out, for the confession of Goldenstaab was open to suspicion unless it could be corroborated by independent witnesses, and of these Dick was the most important.

When the young fireman could not be bribed by offers of position and money, or frightened by threats, his father was approached.

Issacher's brother was well esteemed by all who knew him, and he naturally felt his brother's position keenly.

He called on Dr. Macy and appealed to him to get him to keep Dick away from the trial.

"Think of the disgrace to the family," he urged; "even if my brother should be guilty, which I doubt, what good can it do to send him to prison?"

"The crime is an awful one," the clergyman replied.

"I know it, but Abram will leave the country; he will go back to Germany and there commence a new life. For his family's sake spare him."

"My son is under bonds to appear as a witness."

"Bonds? Only a thousand dollars. I will pay that, only keep him out of the way. Let him travel, or be sick, or anything, so he does not appear."

"I am very sorry for you, but supposing Dick was unable to appear, the trial would only be postponed, and the disgrace would rest upon my family."

"No, there would be no trial. The district attorney would be out of office, and whether the Republican or Democrat is elected in his place, it would make no difference; neither would care about reviving a prosecution that had once failed."

But all the arguments were useless; Dr. Macy as well as his son were proof against all temptations.

Another letter was received by Dick, followed by a telegram, signed by a name which was proved to be fictitious and an address which had no existence.

It wanted but two days to the trial, and Dick was getting nervous. Could any one help being nervous when he had been the recipient of letters threatening him with death if he did his duty?

"Dick, you have to go to the city to-morrow early; I have a letter from the district attorney, and I am sorry I cannot go with you."

"I shall be all right, father."

"I believe you will, only be careful."

"You may depend on me for that."

Although he put on an appearance of courage, he was far from feeling brave as he bade his mother and father adieu on the morning he had to leave for the city.

After his interview with the assistant district attorney our young hero started off to see his old friends at the engine house.

We may be sure that he was accorded a hearty welcome, and spent a most pleasant day.

In the evening he walked toward the hotel where he was to live during his stay in the city. He was particularly happy, and sang in a low voice as he walked through the streets.

"Say, mister, can you help a poor man who has had nothing to eat since morning?"

The whining tone of the suppliant disgusted Dick, but he was generous and light-hearted. To him it was awful to think that any one should be hungry amid such wealth as was to be found in the city, and he often wished he possessed enough so that he could relieve distress as he would like.

"Hungry, are you?"

"Yes, good sir, so hungry, and I have a family waiting for food."

"Where do you live?"

The man whined out an address which was far from the place where they were then standing.

Dick put his hand in his pocket to get some money, when a stunning blow from the suppliant sent him sprawling on the pavement.

He fell with his head on the curb, and only retained consciousness long enough to see that there were two or three men around him.

Almost at the same moment that he fell a hack appeared on the scene and halted close to the men.

The door was opened and Dick was lifted in, one of the men following him into the hack. Another man jumped on the box by the side of the driver, and the hack was driven away from the neighborhood as fast as the horse could move.

Through some narrow and filthy streets down to the water's edge the hack went. A halt was called and the hack drew up before a miserable-looking shanty which was out of place in a city. A man, old and apparently feeble, came out and asked if the young fireman was in the hack. An answer in the affirmative was given, and the old man straightened his back and shouted aloud his joy.

A boat lay near the dock, and the old man pulled the cord which secured it and drew the boat to the side of the rickety pier.

Dick was lifted from the hack and placed in the boat, followed by the old man and one other.

"Ta-ta!" called the hack driver, as the boat left the dock. "Ta-ta! Take care of the young beaut."

An answering laugh came back in answer, and the hack was driven away.

The two men pulled at the oars vigorously, and the boat skimmed through the water.

After proceeding some little distance one of the men threw some old tarpaulins over Dick so that if any one looked in the boat no sign of a prisoner would be manifest.

Once a challenge was given by one of the river police, but the answer was evidently satisfactory, for the police did not overhaul the boat nor interfere with it in any way.

For more than an hour the men rowed, resting at times, but only for a few minutes.

A little creek ran through a swamp, and up this creek the boat was pulled for half a mile.

"I say, Bill, that has been a stiff pull."

"You are right, Tom, and we've earned every cent we're to get."

"Say, Bill, what would it be worth to squeal?"

"Wouldn't do it."

"Nor me; but if we threatened to squeal we'd get what we asked."

"I see; you're a deep un, Tom, but a bargain's a bargain, an' I'll not go back on it."

While the two villains had been talking the boat had been leisurely moving up the creek until it was opposite a small shanty standing in a little oasis in the marsh.

One of the men jumped into the shallow water and dragged the boat up to the oasis, fastening it to a small stake.

Then the other got out, and between them they lifted Dick, who was still unconscious, out of the boat and carried him into the shanty.

They placed him very carefully on a straw mattress which was lying on the floor, fearful that he might wake before they were ready.

"Now you stay by him, Bill, while I go an' get the rhino."

"You'll come straight back?"

"On me honor as a gentleman, as the sayin' is. I'll be back in the mornin' as soon as I can get the hundred, for that I'm goin' to stick out for, see?"

Bill did not half like being left by his comrade, for though there is said to be honor among thieves, Tom was not thought to be possessed of a large amount of that gentlemanly quality.

Tom swore on his honor and Bill laughed, then he took the oath with his hand on his throat, signifying in the pantomime of "professionals" that any one could cut his throat if he violated his oath, and then Bill believed him.

Tom looked at Dick, who was lying very calmly on the mattress, and then took a small bottle from his pocket, poured some of its contents on a piece of rag and held it over Dick's mouth.

"Say, Bill, if he moves give him some more of this quieter, see?"

The bottle was handed to Bill, and Tom once more got into the boat and pulled rapidly down the creek.

"If he plays me false I'll——"

Bill never finished the sentence; perhaps the punishment was too awful for utterance, or it may have been that he had not quite decided what form of vengeance would be meted out to the violator of his professional oath.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHEN ROGUES FALL OUT," ETC.

Bill was very sure that Dick would not awake, so he filled a short pipe with rank tobacco and lighted it, at the same time settling himself in the doorway of the shanty.

"S'pose I'll have to sit here all night. Well, I can stand it for once, an', if Tom gets that hundred, it'll be good pay for one night's sittin' up."

He moistened the inner recesses of his throat by taking a copious draught of some liquid which smelled as strongly rank as did the tobacco he was smoking, but evidently he liked it, and there is no accounting for tastes.

"Now let me think it all out to make sure as I know it all. This bloke has to be kept away from the city for two days, an' he's to be kept asleep all the time. Cos why? He mustn't know he's been here. Then, on the night of the second day, he's to be taken to some quiet place an' left where the cops can get him easy. An' for this work we're to have a fiver each now, an' another fiver apiece when the job's done. If Tom can work the fifty-apiece racket it'll pay better."

Bill took some more moistener and refilled his pipe. He looked at Dick and fancied he saw him move. That would never do, so some more of the subtle ether was applied to the sleeper's nose, and Bill smiled at the easy job he had.

The hours of the night passed, and the watcher did not appear to have suffered from want of rest.

The sun was struggling through the clouds when Bill caught sight of the boat coming up the creek.

"Hello, Bill; any trouble?"

"Nary a bit, on'y it's been purty lonesome all night."

"Guess that's so; I'm blamed tired."

"How did you get on?"

"So-so. I brought a bottle an' some frankfurters, an' some bread, so we'll struggle through all right."

"We'll make a fire and broil the frankfurters."

"Right you are."

Although Bill was aching to know whether Tom had got the money, he did not ask, for there was always a kind of standoffishness about the leader of the villains which made questions hard to ask.

It was late in the afternoon before Bill summoned up courage to ask, and then he did it with a diffidence out of keeping with his general character.

"Want to settle as we go along, eh?"

"Yes, Tom! is it not best?"

"If you can't trust me, of course; but atween friends——"

"Short reckoning makes long friends, I've heard say," answered Bill, laughing at his boldness.

"Very well. Now, let me see; if I give you twenty-five you'll be well paid."

"Then you only got fifty?"

"What I got an' what I didn't get ain't nothin' to do wid you."

"Yes, it has; we're in for this share an' share alike."

"Are we? Well, then, Bill, I've got somethin' to say. Whose house is this?"

"Your'n."

"That's true. Now whose boat have we been usin'?"

"Your'n."

"Right as a trivet, me hearty! Now, says I to myself, says I, the boat is your'n, the house is your'n, the risk is your'n, so charge the firm—that's me an' you—fifty dollars for rent of boat an' house, an' then divide even, an' that is fair; now ain't it?"

"Then you got a hundred?"

"Right again."

"Then I'll have fifty."

"No, you won't; there is rent an' risk to pay, an' that comes to me."

"I'll have half or I'll——"

"What?"

"Squeal."

"Fool!"

"Gi' me half or I'll wake up the kid an' tell him all."

Although neither of the villains knew it, every word had been heard by Dick. He had awoke from the effects of the ether, and, although still half dazed, he had his wits about him sufficiently to understand that he had been abducted, and that the men were to keep him away from the city until the trials were over.

He kept his eyes closed and assumed unconsciousness so well that both men were deceived. They looked at him and were well satisfied that he was under the influence of the drug.

"Be reasonable, Bill. Let me keep the fifty for the rent an' risk, an' I'll give you half of all I get to-morrow."

"I'll have half now, or——"

"You don't mean it."

"Don't I? Well, you'll see, quick, too."

Bill had grown bolder every minute. He seemed to have realized all at once that his companion was only a man, and that he was his equal, if not his superior in strength.

"Come now, Bill, be like a man."

"That's the word; I will," he stood up and looked glaringly at Tom, then he got close to him and put his fist in the other's face. "Now, give me fifty."

Tom pushed him away, and Bill's foot caught in a tree root, causing him to fall. He jumped to his feet and struck out vigorously at his partner in guilt. The men clinched and were in for a rough-and-tumble fight.

Dick watched the struggle for the supremacy, and as the men fought they got farther away from the little house.

Dick crept out, and like a noiseless Indian he crawled to the boat, untied it and pushed out from the bank.

He had not the slightest idea where he was, nor in what direction to go, but he had escaped for a time, and there was comfort in that thought.

But soon his hands refused to obey his will. The effect of the anæsthetic had almost paralyzed him. He dropped the oars and let the boat drift where it would, for he was powerless.

* * * * *

Away in the city the courthouse was crowded to hear the evidence against the wealthy property owner, Abram Issacher, who was accused of setting fire to his property for the sake of the heavy insurance placed upon it and its contents.

The district attorney was conducting the case in person, and all his assistants were on hand to prompt him on points of law, or to assist in placing the evidence before the court.

The opening speech had been clear, and those who heard it realized that if the People could prove all that had been stated the guilt of the accused was plain.

Then the witnesses were called. The People placed the insurance agents on the stand to prove the amount of insurance on the various pieces of property and no serious cross-examination was attempted.

The county clerk proved the ownership of the houses by his official records, and no one wished to dispute his testimony.

Then followed a number of witnesses whose evidence was only material in forming a complete chain, but there had been nothing to show the guilt of the wealthy man at the bar.

There was considerable sensation when Goldenstaab was called.

The counsel for the defense here arose and asked the permission of the court to make an objection. The witness, he said, had been an agent of the accused, and had collected rents and looked after the property until just before the present indictment had been found, when a dispute over money matters had caused the dismissal of the witness. It was understood that the witness was

to testify as an informant, and, in fact, he would admit that he was a *participis criminis*, and was promised immunity if he would become State's evidence. He asked the court to rule that nothing the witness might say should be accepted unless corroborated by a pure witness.

"Certainly, brother, your contention is a just one, and the People must be prepared to corroborate the witness."

"That the People will do," exclaimed the district attorney.

There were a number of objections against allowing the witness to testify, but all were overruled by the judge.

Goldenstaab told his story fully, and with every appearance of truth; but, being an informer, having lived as the agent of the accused, his evidence was looked upon with suspicion.

"The witness is yours," said the district attorney, when the examination in chief was finished.

"May it please the court, I would like to postpone the cross-examination of this witness until after the corroborating witness has been examined."

"The application is an unusual one."

"The circumstances are unusual."

"I do not think I can grant the application."

"But, your honor, we have reason to believe that there is no one to corroborate the witness, and I shall ask for the arrest of this reptile, this snake in the grass, for perjury; and I'm sure that your honor will grant the warrant unless the People can corroborate the evidence."

"You can postpone the cross-examination until after the next witness."

"Thank you, your honor."

"Richard Macy! Rich-ard—Macy! Richard Macy!"

The name echoed through the court as the clerk called it out with constantly changing emphasis and tone of voice.

But no Richard Macy responded.

"Richard Macy!"

Some one was seen pushing his way through the crowded court to the district attorney, and was seen to whisper in his ear.

"Richard Macy!"

"May it please the court"—there was silence, for it was the People who spoke through the district attorney—"our witness cannot be found. He mysteriously disappeared last night, and we have been unable to find any trace of him up to the present. I would ask the court to adjourn until the morning."

The counsel for the defense argued against such a course, saying it was an injustice to the accused, and that there was no proof that any witness would be forthcoming on the morrow. He asked the court to instruct the jury that there was no case, and to bring in a verdict of not guilty.

After a great deal of sparring between counsel the court announced that it agreed with the defense, and already the prisoner was putting on his coat, ready to leave the court. It wanted only the official declaration of "Not Guilty."

"Gentlemen of the jury, it is always unsatisfactory to find a case break down so lamentably as this has done. The case ought never to have been brought to trial unless the People had witnesses. The duty is plain. An informer's word cannot be believed unless corroborated, and therefore in this case there is no evidence——"

There was a considerable commotion at the end of the courtroom and a young man was seen pushing his way to the front.

He was dirty, ragged, his clothes looked as though they had been dragged through mud, his face was bleeding from scratches and cuts, while a great lump on his forehead showed the effects of a terrific blow.

"May it please the court, this is my witness, Richard Macy."

Issacher sank back in his chair in the dock, his face whiter than snow; his counsel muttered something like a curse, and even the judge, whose sympathies were always with the rich, seemed annoyed.

"Richard Macy!"

Dick walked to the witness chair and stood waiting for the oath to be administered.

The room seemed to him to be whirling around, and before the clerk was able to hand him the Bible, on which the oath was to be taken, he reeled and fell to the floor.

He had fainted.

CHAPTER XIX.

VINDICATED.

There was excitement enough to furnish sensational reporters with columns of copy.

The judge looked bewildered, the district attorney did not know what to do with himself. The learned quibblers who had been retained for the defense blustered and fumed with apparent indignation and asked the judge to dismiss the jury, as he had charged that there was no evidence.

Of course the judge would not agree to anything of the sort, and then the counsel made an eloquent, though defiant, speech, charging that the People had descended to sensationalism to influence the jury, and that no verdict could stand if it was rendered on such sensational evidence.

The counsel had overdone it. No evidence had been given, and so they were a little premature.

The district attorney asked that the case might be adjourned until the next day, in order that the witness might recuperate, but instantly the defense objected, openly charging that the interval was to be used in coaching the witness.

In vain the People scorned such an insinuation; the judge was with the accused in sympathy, and he would only allow a recess of an hour.

"If the witness is not ready to go on then, you must present a doctor's certificate to that effect."

"Very well, your honor, we bow to your decision."

The defense was exultant, for the doctor had whispered to the lawyer:

"That boy is paralyzed; he will never speak again."

But Dick was rapidly recovering in the anteroom, and long before the hour had passed he was ready to go into the witness chair and tell his story.

The clerk of the court shouted for silence, and the judge took his seat on the bench.

"Richard Macy!"

Dick walked feebly to the chair and his face flushed as he took the oath, for he was weak, and even the few moments he was compelled to stand were too much for him.

He sank into a chair and the district attorney commenced:

"Macy, tell the court, in your own way, why you were not here this morning.

"'Bject!" shouted the attorney for the defense.

The judge allowed Dick to tell his story, and he did so clearly. He told how he had been asked for alms, and then knocked down; he narrated his experience in the cabin and told of his escape.

"When I found that my hands would not obey my inclination, that I could not row. I just let the boat glide where it would. For some time my escape had not been noticed, but when they had settled their quarrel and found that I had gone, they commenced a pursuit, running along the bank of the creek up to their knees in water. One of the men spied me——"

"What is that?"

"Saw me."

"Why could you not say so?"

"And fired a pistol at me. I saw that I should be taken, so I jumped out of the boat and swam to the opposite bank of the creek. I got into shallow water, having no idea where I was, but I walked along and stumbled often, until I saw a man fishing. I called to him, and said if he would take me across to the city I would give him five dollars. He agreed, and landed me on the opposite side of the river. I found that I had some miles to go, but I kept on until I fell down exhausted. After several hours I got here."

"A very pretty story!" sneered the defense.

Dick had enlisted the sympathies of the people, and even the judge appeared to feel that he was telling the truth.

Then he was called on to give his evidence about the firebugs, and he corroborated Goldenstaab so thoroughly that there could be no doubt of the guilt of the accused.

The defense fought valiantly, and the lawyer, who had won the sobriquet of "silver tongue," pleaded with the jury, using the most plausible arguments in favor of his client.

"Why should this man endanger his liberty for a few paltry thousands, when his name is good at the bank for a hundred thousand any day? Why should this man, educated, refined, a lover of the fine arts, choose to take the risk of spending the last years of his life among the vilest criminals in our State jail, when he could be the honored guest of the most refined men on the continent?"

Much more of such eloquence was used, but the evidence was too strong, and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty.

Then the defense gave notice of an application for a new trial, and asked that Dick Macy should be placed under heavy bonds not to leave the city.

"As I understand it, the witness, Macy, is in the fire department," said the judge, "and therefore he can be found at any time."

"The witness is suspended, and it is not at all likely that he will return."

"Mr. District Attorney, what have you to say to that?"

"Nothing, your honor, save that if the court binds the witness in the sum of a million dollars, I have not the least doubt the bail would be forthcoming."

There was considerable cheering at that time, for Dick was popular with every one.

The sentence was suspended and the court arose.

Dick was held in nominal bail to come forward if needed for a new trial, and then he went to the hotel, hoping to get some dinner and a change of clothes.

He had not finished his bath before a message was sent up to his room that some people wanted to see him.

When he had dressed he went into the parlor and saw Mrs. Albrecht and Alice waiting for him.

They had come on from Boston to make a visit, and had heard where Dick was staying.

All this time Dr. and Mrs. Macy had been waiting to congratulate their son on his escape and on the conviction of the firebug.

"What a terrible time you had in that swamp, Dick; you ought to write an account of it for the papers."

"I do not think I shall have time, father, for I have an idea in my mind which I must work out first."

"An idea! You have an idea?" Alice saucily remarked.

"Yes, Alice, and I don't mind telling you that if I can work it out there will be millions in it."

"Millions of what?"

"Dollars, of course. What did you think?"

A messenger boy entered with a message for "Fireman Macy, of Engine No. 5."

Dick opened the envelope and read the short message; then his eyes became dim and he felt it necessary to wipe them several times.

"I have news," he said, in a voice which was very tremulous.

"Good news, Dick?"

"Read it, father."

Dr. Macy took the letter and read its contents aloud to those present:

"I have the honor to inform you that at a special meeting of the Fire Commissioners, held this afternoon, the order of suspension has been rescinded and you are restored to your rank, at once, or as early as you wish to return to your duties. It is furthermore my pleasure to add that the commissioners have voted you a medal for services rendered to the department and to the public at large. The medal will be presented as soon as it can be made."

Such was the letter which, signed by the chief of the department, had so affected Dick.

"I shall be ready in the morning."

"No, Dick, you must take a rest, for your health must be considered first."

Mrs. Albrecht begged so earnestly for Dick to spend a few days with them in Boston that it was difficult to decline the invitation.

Dick obtained leave of absence for a week, and early next morning started for Boston with the Albrechts. Mr. Albrecht met the party at the Union Depot and gave Macy a hearty welcome.

CHAPTER XX.

WITH THE FIRE LADDIES IN BOSTON.

Dick was so thorough a fireman that when, on the second day at the magnificent residence of Merchant Albrecht on Commonwealth Avenue, he heard the fire alarm, he forgot his friends and started out to see the fire and to note the action of the Boston firemen.

Boston has an excellent department, no money is spared to make it efficient, and no sooner is an invention tried than Boston secures it if it is likely to help the men in fighting the flames.

The fire was in one of the largest office buildings in the city, and threatened to destroy, not only the building, but the entire block.

Macy reached the fire and pushed his way through the fire line so that he could watch the better.

A policeman seized him by the shoulder.

"Say, young fellow, you're too fresh for this town; better go back to the country."

"Were you speaking to me?"

"You know as well as I do that I was. Now clear out, or I'll try a little club medicine."

"No, you won't."

"Yes, I will. Now, then, get back into the crowd or you'll see."

Dick allowed the policeman to keep his hand on his shoulder, but would not stand any impertinence. He knew that the officer was doing his duty, though in an offensive way.

"I am a fireman myself," answered Dick, showing his badge.

"Off duty?"

"No, I do not belong to Boston."

"Then get back, for you haven't any right here. We can manage our own affairs pretty well."

Dick saw that a fireman was in a perilous position and that he was alone at the scaling ladder. At that moment he cared nothing for the policeman, but shook him off as easily as a dog can shake a rat, and bounded across to the place where the fireman was struggling with a scaling ladder.

Dick caught the ladder and saved the man from a dangerous fall. Then he followed the man up the ladder and held it at the window while the Bostonian ascended a story higher.

"Who is that civilian who is interfering there?" asked a battalion chief.

"Don't know, but I'm blamed if he isn't better than many of our men. He is a born fireman."

"Davids, I hear that you have allowed a civilian to interfere with our work! what does it mean?"

It was the chief who spoke, and his eyes flashed with angry fire, for the chief would not allow the slightest insubordination.

"I do not know who he is, chief, but he is a fireman, every inch of him."

"But what right has he to be here? If anything happens to him we shall be blamed."

While he was speaking a foreman shouted to his battalion chief:

"Look at that civilian; he beats all I ever saw."

The chief looked at the burning building and saw Dick catch a broken telegraph wire which passed over the house, and swing himself by it to the next house roof.

It was a daring thing to do, and no one could see the value of such an acrobatic feat, until Dick swung the wire back and shouted:

"Secure a hose to it and swing it over here."

The fireman saw then the advantage to be gained. He had been wondering how he could reach the other roof, which was separated by some ten feet from the one on which he was standing, and Dick had solved the problem.

The hose was attached and then began a series of swinging of the wire so that it could be caught by Dick.

If he had only a grappling hook he could have reached it the first time, but it swung only within three feet of him.

Once more the man tried, and Dick saw that it would take too long to get it in that way.

The other end of the wire was hanging loose and Dick wondered whether he could not throw it across to the fireman.

He found a loose brick on the roof and twisted the wire around it.

"Look out!"

As soon as he had given the warning he threw the brick across to the burning house.

The fireman attached the hose to it and Dick pulled it over.

"Let her go!" he shouted to the man at the engine.

The man saw that a big force of water would be needed, and so he attached a Siamese coupler to the hose and thus got a double feed.

Dick had called for a Breslin support which the man had on the roof.

By means of the invention of Chief Breslin of the New York Fire Department, one man can manipulate a hose which, without it, would tax the strength of ten men.

Dick stuck the spike of his Breslin into the roof, which fortunately gave him a good leverage, and then the water came up with such force that it seemed as though the young fireman would never be able to control the hose single-handed.

Macy steadied himself by leaning against a chimney, and then directed the water on the roof of the other house.

"Whoever he is, I would give a year's salary to have him on our force," said the chief.

"Yes, he could give our men points."

"He must be a fireman."

"He is only a boy."

"Boy or man, I tell you he is a wonder."

"Why not send some men up to help him?"

"Do so. Tell Number Six to go to his relief. Enter the house and break through the roof if necessary."

There was a pretty general opinion that the block was saved through Dick's prompt action.

Of course, it was only a question of a few minutes before the next house would have been entered and a stream of water sent from the roof, but those below had not seen the necessity of it at the time Dick swung across the yawning chasm which separated the two houses.

The fire was subdued. The men were gathering in the hose into the wagons, and the engines were preparing to go back to their houses. Then it was that Dick descended to the street and was slinking away as though he did not want to be noticed.

A hand was placed on his shoulder and a harsh voice uttered the two ominous words which mean so much:

"You're wanted!"

A criminal shudders when he hears them, a schoolboy expects some punishment when an order comes from the teacher to tell him he is wanted. All through life there is something almost appalling in those words, and even at last death must needs say the same thing—"you're wanted."

But there are times when the words are uttered and the consequences are pleasant, though the rule is that in such cases a milder invitation is given.

"Who wants me?" asked Dick.

"The chief."

"What for?"

"He didn't tell me."

The messenger led the way to the chief, who was standing by his private buggy, talking to a popular actor who is an honorary member of the Boston Fire Department.

"Are you the young man who swung across from that roof to the other house?"

"Yes, sir."

"What made you do it?"

"I thought it was the quickest way to get the hose across to the place where it would do the most good."

"What right had you to do it?"

"Only the right that every man has to help save property."

"I suppose you thought the firemen inefficient?"

"On the contrary, I thought them most efficient."

"And yet you interfered?"

"I went first to save a man's life. He had been left alone with a scaling ladder and it was too much for him. He would have fallen and perhaps have been killed if I had not seized the ladder."

"That may have been, but he was not on the roof."

"No; but when I saw he was alone I thought I might give him a hand, and so I went up with him. Did I do wrong?"

"It is contrary to the rules for a civilian to interfere with the department."

"You do not allow volunteers to assist?"

"No, we have no need of volunteers."

"I am sorry that I have violated your rules, but I am not sorry that I helped to save the houses."

"What is your name, may I ask?"

"Richard Macy."

No sooner did Dick mention his name than the chief caught him by the hand.

"I might have known it! Is there such another hero in the whole United States?"

"Thousands, tens of thousands of them, and far more heroic than I have ever been. It is only accident, chief."

"What are you doing in Boston?"

"I have a vacation and am visiting in your city."

The chief turned to the actor.

"I tell you what it is, Robinson, this boy, for he is only a boy, was rightly called by one of our papers 'The Fire Fiend's Nemesis.'"

"I try to do what I can. I love the work," Dick said, modestly. "You must indeed love it when you spoil a vacation——"

"And a suit of clothes," interjected the actor.

"Yes, and a suit of clothes, in order to volunteer to put out a fire. Come home with me and dine, will you not?"

"I am sorry, chief, that I must decline to-day; but if you will allow me I will call to-morrow at your office."

"Of course, and you must dine with me. I have two girls, and they are in love with you; oh, they have read of you in the papers, and my three boys worship you, they say."

"What have I done to deserve such distinction?"

"You have done your duty in a way that is almost strange in this age."

Dick promised to dine on the next day with the chief, and was again about to start for home, or rather the home of the Albrechts, when the chief called him.

"You have ruined your clothes; you must allow the department to provide you with new ones."

"No, no, I do not need such generosity."

"That is not the question; I insist on doing so. Take my card and go to Messrs. Clippem's store and select a suit; you can get good ones there, and send in the bill to me."

"But I would rather not——"

"Very likely, but I insist. If you still refuse I shall think you want to insult me."

Dick felt that he must accept, and so he once more obtained a suit of clothes at the expense of those he had helped in the time of need.

Dick's time in Boston was taken up with an inspection of each of the fire stations. It was no use trying to excuse himself, each insisted that he must see their particular engine, or truck, of water tower, and Dick really enjoyed the tour of inspection, only regretting that he had to be away from the Albrechts so much.

It was Alice who felt neglected, and yet she was proud of the distinction Dick had gained.

She called him "my Dick" to herself, and she had a portrait of the young hero in a locket which she always carried. It was true that lockets were not fashionable, so she carried it in the bosom of her dress and satisfied her desire without offending fashion.

She really did so admire Dick that had he asked her to be his, in some distant time when they had both reached a more mature age, she would have been ready to swear that she would be his and his only till death did them part. But Dick never asked her, and so she only admired him in her heart and talked of him as a brave hero who had saved her life.

CHAPTER XXI.

DICK'S SURPRISES.

Are you very much interested in the inventions which have done so much for the efficiency of the fire departments of our large cities?

If you are you will have noticed a water tower which differs from others in that it throws a larger force of water at a smaller expenditure of power than any other in use. Should you search the records of the Patent Office you will see that the water tower was the invention of Richard Macy, but patented by a company to whom he had transferred his rights.

But that is not the only invention of this young genius, for many he never had patented, but gave to the department.

Go around among the houses and you will hear the firemen describe some wonderful contrivance for the more effective fighting of fire, and you will doubtless be told that it was the invention of a young fellow whose name they cannot recall.

Five years have passed since Richard Macy shocked the *elite* of New Lenster by declaring in the presence of the bishop and General Goston, U. S. A., that he preferred being a fireman to anything else.

Five years is not a long period in the life of a nation, but it is a long time in the life of a boy. It was long enough to change the schoolboy into the matured man, looking older than his years would warrant, but showing in every line of his face and movement of his body that he was a true man; and greater honor none can have than that.

During that five years Dick had made his mark effectively. He had seen a new trial granted to the firebugs and had given evidence on the second trial, which was more thorough in its conduct than the first one. Issacher had been sentenced to thirty years in State's prison, and all his wealth could not save him.

Goldenstaab had gone back to Germany, sent there by his own friends, and from recent reports he was doing well and, what was better, living honestly.

For a time the heavy sentence on the wealthy incendiary had a deterrent effect, and fires were less in number.

Dick had many narrow escapes and often felt that the brittle thread of life must be snapped.

He arose to be captain of an engine house before he was of the legal age to vote, but age did not count in such cases, for he had proved his courage, shown his coolness in times of danger, and manifested a degree of ability which merited recognition.

And now, as we are going to leave him, we prefer to do so at his father's house in New Lenster.

Dick had obtained a leave of absence so that he could spend his twenty-first birthday at home.

He had anticipated a quiet time, and looked forward to enjoying the day with his own family; but others arranged differently.

Dr. Macy was proud of his son and intended giving him a surprise on his attaining his majority.

A large number of congratulatory letters and telegrams arrived in the early part of the day, and many valuable presents, among them being a gold chronometer watch from Engine Company Five, and a handsome gold and diamond ring from the chief of his department.

His father managed to get him out for a long walk, to talk over the future, in the afternoon, and when they returned to the house there were the Albrechts, and the sons and daughters of the Boston chief waiting to personally congratulate Richard Macy on becoming, legally, a man.

Then the Ungers, the Newmans and several others arrived,

and when dinner was announced there were twenty-two people to partake of it.

We know how they enjoyed it, and what a happy time they all had, so there is no need to describe the dinner or the feast of wit which accompanied it.

Dinner was not over before a deputation of New Lensterites, headed by the postmaster, called to present a tribute.

It was in the shape of a silver helmet, of no value as a helmet, but a valuable ornament, typical of Dick's life. On the helmet was an inscription setting forth the names of the subscribers and stating that it was presented to "our esteemed townsman, Richard Macy, Esquire, on the occasion of his twenty-first birthday."

Dick made a little speech, which proved that he had not forgotten the education he had received at the military academy of New Lenster, and which proved also that being a fireman did not prevent him being a good speaker.

But before the evening had passed another surprise was in store for him.

A telegram was handed to him, and when he opened the envelope he was surprised at the length of the message.

It was from the fire commissioners of a Western city, and was also signed by the mayor.

It told him that it had been unanimously agreed to offer him the position of chief of the fire department, at a salary which was flattering to any man, more especially to such a young man.

The telegram did not say what the salary was to be, but declared that it should be equal to that paid by any city of its size in the United States.

Then, the message continued, that the resolution had been passed several days before, but as it was necessary that the position should be filled by a citizen, the mayor had advised waiting until Dick's birthday, so that he, being a citizen after noon, could accept the position.

The splendid career which was offered him made a most appropriate birthday present, and Dick received the congratulations of his friends.

Then Dr. Macy let the cat out of the bag by saying that he had known of the intended offer for some days, and that, if Dick accepted it, he should move to the same city, for he had received a call to a large church and a professorship in the State university.

"All's well that ends well," Shakespeare made a proverb, and with it we end our story of the struggles and successes of a young fireman.

Dick Macy was not perfect; he had his faults, like other youths, but he did his duty and acted in all things conscientiously.

He accepted the position out West, which he still holds, and only very recently we heard that Alice Albrecht was talking of living in the same town; and as her folks would remain in Boston, it is easy to conjecture that she had no objection to a fireman husband.

His success proved that labor is no disgrace, and that a fireman may achieve as much honor as a member of any of the professions.

Again it was proved true that it is the man, and not his profession or his clothes, which merits regard, for

"Rank is but the guinea stamp,
A man's a man for a' that."

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 49, will contain "The Boy Wonder; or, Dick Gray's Marvelous Pump," by Matt Royal. Well, that pump was a marvelous one, and no mistake. The wonders that Dick Gray performed with it were unparalleled, and his adventures form a story of the greatest charm and excitement. You cannot fail to be delighted with it.

Largest Circulation of Any 5c. Library Published

Tip Top Weekly

THE IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH

The stories that appear in Tip Top have been written especially for the bright, up-to-date American lad. They detail the adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell, two brothers, who are all-around athletes with plenty of pluck and dash.

LATEST NUMBERS

384—Frank Merriwell's Quick Move; or, Cooling Off Cap'n Wiley.

385—Dick Merriwell's Red Friend;

or, Old Joe Crowfoot to the Front.

386—Frank Merriwell's Nomads; or, Cap'n Wiley's Clever Work.

387—Dick Merriwell's Distrust;

or, Meeting the Masked Champions.

388—Frank Merriwell's Grand Finish;

or, The Independent Champions of America.

389—Dick Merriwell Back at Fardale; or, Getting Onto the Eleven.

390—Dick Merriwell's New Enemy; or, The Hatred of Barron Black.

391—Dick Merriwell's Hard Struggle;

or, Great Work on the Gridiron.

392—Dick Merriwell Held in Check;

or, Chester Arlington's Successful Move.

393—Dick Merriwell's Firm Hand; or, Settling Old Scores.

394—Dick Merriwell's Last Resort; or, Fighting Hard to the Finish.

*To be had from all newsdealers, or sent upon the receipt of price, 5c.,
by the publishers*

STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., New York City